

# ANTIQUITIES OF HIMACHAL



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M. POSTEL • A. NEVEN • K. MANKODI

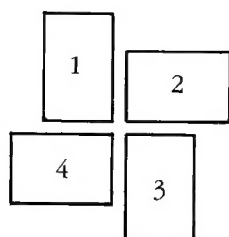
Antiquities of Himachal attempts to acquaint the reader with little known wooden and stone temples, sculptures in wood and stone, bronzes, and that unique form of art — the metal mask or *mohra*.

A number of indigenous wooden temples which incorporate and continue the earlier classical tradition are illustrated.

So far, the earliest known sculptures and bronzes were those in the Lakṣanādevī temple at Bharmaur, and the Śaktidevī temple at Chhatradi, in Chamba. Here, however, some earlier (stone and wood) carvings datable to the sixth and seventh centuries are published for the first time.

For the first time, also, a large number of brass and silver *mohras* (masks), which are still in worship in some of the temples in remote villages of the Kullu, Mandi and Simla districts are illustrated, and a chronology based on a strict morphological analysis attempted.

Emphasis is laid on new material, and on its visual presentation.



1. Viśveśvara temple, Bajaura
2. Chambu temple, Kasholigad
3. *Mohras* of Ādi Brahmā, Khokhan
4. *Devatā* procession, Karjan

Original with:

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Price in India: Rs. 1200

Price abroad: £58

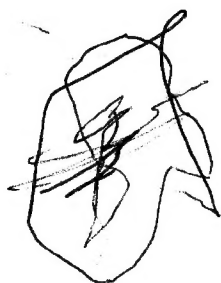
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# ANTIQUITIES OF HIMACHAL



*Bust of the legendary Śujunīdevī of Nirmand, photographed only once before, by H. L. H. Shuttleworth in 1919, when it was brought out of the bhandar. It was stolen in 1982, but was*

*fortunately recovered by the Police. The style is not local, but of the Gaurī-Śaṅkara bronze in Chamba. The date recorded in the inscription corresponds to Tuesday, 12th July 1026 A.D.*

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# ANTIQUITIES OF HIMACHAL

M. POSTEL  
A. NEVEN      K. MANKODI

PROJECT FOR INDIAN CULTURAL STUDIES

VOLUME I

BOMBAY 1985

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20, Dr. E. Moses Road, Bombay 400 011.  
1985

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Composed by Photo-typesetting,  
in Garamond 11 point roman and italics.

Printed in India by Arun Mehta  
at Vakil & Sons Ltd., Vakils House, Sprott Road,  
18 Ballard Estate, Bombay 400 038.



*This work is dedicated to*  
SHRI RAJIV GANDHI  
*as a tribute to his concern,*  
*like his mother's, for India's*  
*Great Cultural Heritage*





# CONTENTS

	Page
PART ONE : HISTORICAL	
I Introduction	3
II The River Systems of Himachal	11
III A Historical Outline of Himachal Pradesh	17
IV Temple Architecture of Himachal	37
V Sculpture of Himachal	59
PART TWO : BRASS ICONS	
I Introductory Remarks	79
II A — The Western Group (Ravi and Chenab)	83
III The Early Classical Period (500 to 800 A.D.)	93
IV The Kashmiri Period (8th to early 10th Century)	99
V The Pratihāra Renewal (10th to 12th Century)	105
VI The Post-Classical Period (13th to 20th Century)	113
VII Metal Torsos in Chamba	123
VIII B — The Eastern Group (Middle Sutlej)	127
IX The Eastern Group (Contd.)	137
X C — The Central Group (Beas)	151
XI D — The Cis-Sutlej Group	163
XII The Modern Phase in Eastern H. P. (16th to 20th Century)	171
PART THREE : MOHRAS	
XIII <i>Mohras</i> from the Sutlej and Beas	179
XIV Earliest and Classical Evidence (6th to 12th Century)	185
XV The Later Classical Groups (12th to 13th Century)	191
XVI The Folkish Group (12th to 14th Century)	205
XVII Embossed <i>Mohras</i>	221
XVIII Fake or Genuine Workmanship?	235
PART FOUR : INSCRIPTIONS	
Inscriptions	249
Appendix A — An Inscribed Metal Mask, <i>by H. C. Shuttleworth</i>	263
Appendix B — Record of a Tour in the Sutlej Valley, <i>by O. C. Sud</i>	266
Appendix C — A Mountain Sacrifice, <i>by H. C. Shuttleworth</i>	279
Appendix D — Extracts from Our Own Tour Reports	284
Epigraphical Charts	308
Bibliography	316
Glossary	317
Index	319
Acknowledgements	327
Map	



## PART ONE : HISTORICAL



*Fig. 1. Mohras of Viṣṇu in village Sajla, Kullu. They are of silver, but with gilded moustaches, eyebrows and necklaces, and are studded with precious stones. The one at top,*

*centre, bears an inscription of Mahārāja Siddha Pāl Singh of Kullu, of Śaka 1422, or 1500 A.D.*

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

**H**IMACHAL PRADESH\* is a small world in itself, which is entered from the plains of Punjab, or from the hills of Simla, through beautiful meandering valleys with slopes covered with pine and typical temperate mountain flora.

The inhabitants of the hills and valleys are gay, colourful, rustic, dignified, proud and secretive like most mountain dwellers living in places difficult of access. „

My travels in this region commenced in 1950 when this part of the country was still rather untouched by tourism. The roads were often one way; the chain barriers across the Mandi to Kullu road were lifted at 8 in the morning to allow the few cars and small buses to travel up to a midpoint where we met the traffic which had simultaneously left Kullu. The road along the torrential Beas was not protected by railings or walls, and landslides and rubble often compelled us to stop and make our way, barefoot, through the cool waters flowing down the mountains.

It was a relief to reach a Dak Bungalow or a Rest House in the evening where the servants would bring us warm water to bathe our tired feet, while

we listened to the song of the *bulbuls* and heard the occasional plop of a red and green mango dropping on the roof top of the Bungalow.

Major Banon at Manali, a retired British officer married to a Tibetan, would show us his small orchard of apples, pears and apricots which he used to forward to Delhi (to which he had last motored in the thirties!), at Rs. 10/- per crate. He also showed us the track to the Hidimbādevī temple above Manali in the giant *deodar* forest, which was abandoned at that time and called a hunting lodge because of the deer antlers hanging on the walls.

Fig. 2. The village of Bharmaur highly perched above the Budhil river in Chamba, where wooden sculptures of the eighth-ninth century, and possibly earlier, have survived, along with a few metal images illustrated in this book for the first time.



\* *Himachal Pradesh* literally means "Land of the Snowy Mountains".



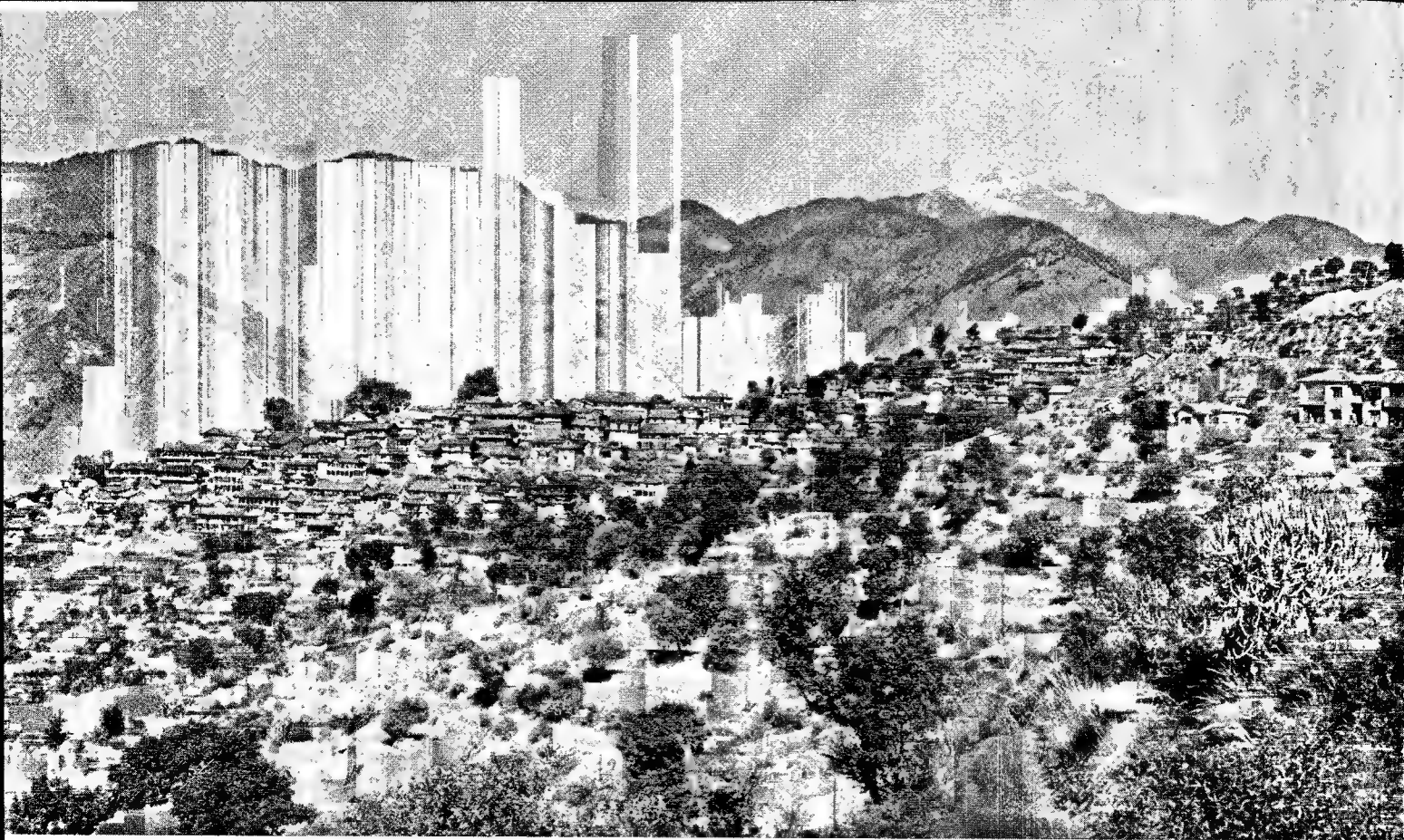


Fig. 3. A view of Nirmand above the Sutlej valley, a quite large village today, but probably a trading centre in

ancient times, where metal and stone images were created for centuries in changing styles.

The walk among those beautiful trees shedding drops of the last shower of rain on the thick moss brightly dotted with small wild strawberries was exhilarating.

The roof of the Hiḍimbādevī temple was in ruins. The large planks had collapsed: some hung precariously and creaked loudly, ghostly in the darkness of the woods.

Interested already by then in Indian Art and Archaeology, I visited the classical temple at Bajaura, and stayed at the enchanting Rest House nearby. Baijnath was majestic and mysterious with its different styles of rustic sculpture.

To cross the Ravi and climb to Bharmaur was a strenuous exercise, but the reward of seeing such large early bronzes and the wooden sculptures described by Goetz was exciting.

The climb to Nirmand from the Sutlej took four hours but the village was rewarding, with its house

entrances of old stones, its wooden temple so rustic in decoration and its well-guarded *bhandar* housing the bust of Śujunīdevī seen and described by H. L. Shuttleworth in March 1919<sup>1</sup>.

The history and the legends of these lands as told by local *pundits*<sup>2</sup> fascinated me. "The Mountain Sacrifice" as reported by H. L. Shuttleworth in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, Christmas Number, 1919<sup>3</sup>, and the rites of these mountain villages, were most exciting. Imagine, therefore, how thrilled and astonished I was when, for the first time, I met a procession of villagers on a narrow road, blowing

1. See Appendix A : "An Inscribed Metal Mask Discovered on the Occasion of the Bhunda Ceremony at Nirmand", paper read before the Dutch Oriental Society, April 21st, 1922 and reproduced in *Acta Orientalia* 1923, pp. 224-229.
2. See Appendix B: The Record of a Tour in the Sutlej Valley in 1973 by Mr. O. Sud of Maria Bros., the Mall, Simla, whose advice was valuable in our travel in the Sutlej valley.
3. See Appendix C.



Fig. 4. Villagers, carrying a palanquin (ratha), descending from their village along the Beas river and on their way to the Dussehra festival at Kullu, 1971.

Fig. 5. Close-up of the masks (mohras) carried on the ratha.

These are made of silver, adorned with jewellery and flowers and mounted on the ratha where they will remain during the festival until they return to their village and are locked away in the sanctum of their temple, or stored for years in the bhandar.



trumpets that curved backwards over their heads, beating drums and singing, followed by a pyramid-shaped palanquin of bright silks, surmounted by a curtained canopy in which, one guessed, a precious relic was being transported. The villagers stopped awhile as I approached the palanquin (*ratha*) and seeing my surprise and enquiring eyes, they respectfully drew the curtain aside to let me look inside.

I saw visages wrought of shining brass and silver, fabricated with a rustic touch, which endowed them with life and a fierce personality. These were masks (*mohras*) or *devatās*, one on top, three below. They were clothed and adorned with flowers and silver necklaces, and on their chest was a rectangular plaque of *repoussé* silver with the rustic design of a goddess on a tiger.

The villagers kept at a respectful distance from the deity, and I did the same, while they drew the curtain together again and proceeded down the road along the Beas. My driver informed me that they had walked from their village at two days' distance from this spot. They were going to Kullu for the *Dussehra* festival, which I attended years later after I learnt more about these *devatās*.

For the moment, many questions cropped up in my mind. I was anxious to know the reason for such a procession, and why just *mohras* of the divinities were being transported. I put these questions to Penelope Chetwode when she was writing in her bungalow above Manali, to Dr. V. C. Ohri when he was Curator of the Museum at Chamba, to Stella Kramrisch when I met her before she left India, and later to Dr. P. Pal in Los Angeles when he was preparing his book on Kashmiri bronzes.

Their answers did not entirely satisfy my thirst for knowledge and I promised myself a further and deeper investigation.

At that time no one was aware of the exact purpose of these *mohras*. Some said they were representations of the dead who had been "divinised", as may be the case with the bust of Śujunīdevī<sup>4</sup> and some other *mohras* which are not evidently made for transport on the *rathas*.

4. See below, p. 123 and the chapter on the inscriptions.



Fig. 6. Villagers with their ratha on their way to a village fair at Karjan, Kullu, 4 August 1984.

Some believed they were reductions of full size bronzes made "economically"<sup>5</sup>. Some were of the opinion that they were made light in structure because of shortage of metal during the invasions. Some believed they were light as to be carried to the fields for *pūja* before or after the harvest.

Most *mohras* have a third eye or a similar mark on the forehead and they are believed to be representations of Śiva.

Dr. V. C. Ohri, the specialist on Himachal Pradesh, told me that there were no such masks (or *devatās*) in Chamba. They were worshipped mostly in villages in the Kullu and Mandi districts.

I started going to the fairs at Kullu, Mandi and even went once to the Nirmand fair, and also visited remote temples with Prof. Armand Neven\* and Dr. Kirit Mankodi†.

5. P. Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir*, p. 220.

6. Fig. 297.

\* Prof. Armand Neven, born 1940, is Master in Archaeology and Musicology (University of Liège, Belgium). Started as a freelance researcher into Indian and Tibetan art since 1973 and has travelled extensively through India. Out of his main publications are: *Lamaistic Art*, 1975 (Brussels), *Indian Painting — Mythology and Legends*, 1976 (Brussels), *Studies into Himalayan and Lamaistic Art*, 1978 (Brussels), *Sculptures from India*, 1978 (Brussels), *New Studies into Indian and Himalayan Sculpture*, 1981 (London — Eersel).

At Kullu and Mandi we saw the remarkable colourful arrangement of the *rathas* on the *maidan*, with *devatās* from dozens of villages. They paid homage to the local deity at the temple first, and then came to the *maidan* to repeatedly bow to each other in a hieratic and rustic fashion which fascinated us.

We took many photographs, particularly of the inscriptions which some of them bore on their chests. Most of these *devatās* appeared to be made of embossed silver with a copper reinforcement behind. They seemed modern, and we were told they were, indeed, made recently or a few decades ago. Very few — those at the top of the pyramids — appeared to be older.

We made our first important discovery with Dr. K. Mankodi when we peeped into the sanctum of the Mahādeva temple at Behena along the Sutlej. There we saw fifteen *devatās*, most of them in the classical style, which appeared to date from the tenth or eleventh century onwards. Surprisingly, we saw a three-headed *mohra* that we could not identify since the sanctum is not accessible, and a two-headed one, which we could not identify either although it was possible to take pictures of all from a distance. Most of them were reminiscent of those I had seen in the Berlin Museum<sup>6</sup> and in private collections in Europe, photographed by Prof. A. Neven.

We realised also that these *devatās* differed in type according to the two main regions (Kullu and the Sutlej valley) and on the basis of their age. The older ones were of the classical type, and the newer ones of folkish design.

Our collections of photographs of bronzes and masks grew rapidly, and soon we had a sizeable amount of documentation on which we could

† Dr. Kirit Mankodi obtained his Master's degree in Archaeology in 1963 and a doctorate in Iconography in 1966, both from the Poona University. He has taught post-graduate classes in Pune and Bhopal. His papers on Indian Art and Iconography have been published in the *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, and other periodicals. Since 1978, Dr. Mankodi is working on the Project for Indian Cultural Studies founded by Franco-Indian Pharmaceuticals Pvt. Ltd.

work. Since most of these masks are folkish in style, they are sought by museums and collectors of folk art. When we contacted them, we found very few masks (perhaps two or three dozens in the whole world!) but we came across innumerable small folk bronzes which were labelled "Chamba". This led Prof. A. Neven to make a study of more than a hundred of the larger specimens (12 to 35 cms. in height), evidently cast in the Beas and Sutlej valleys (rarely in Chamba) for the most part, in what we have now called "the Eastern style".

In order to compare the styles and their evolution, Dr. K. Mankodi and Prof. A. Neven travelled repeatedly to Himachal Pradesh to identify the sites and styles on the basis of the sculptures still *in situ*, wooden for the most part, also in stone and sometimes in brass. Dr. K. Mankodi ascertained some dates which are most valuable<sup>8</sup>. Thus from comparison and exchange of ideas a chronology

Fig. 8. The Hidimbā temple in the deodar forest above Manali, as it is covered by snow, in 1983. The roof had been replaced and has lost much of its ancient grandeur.

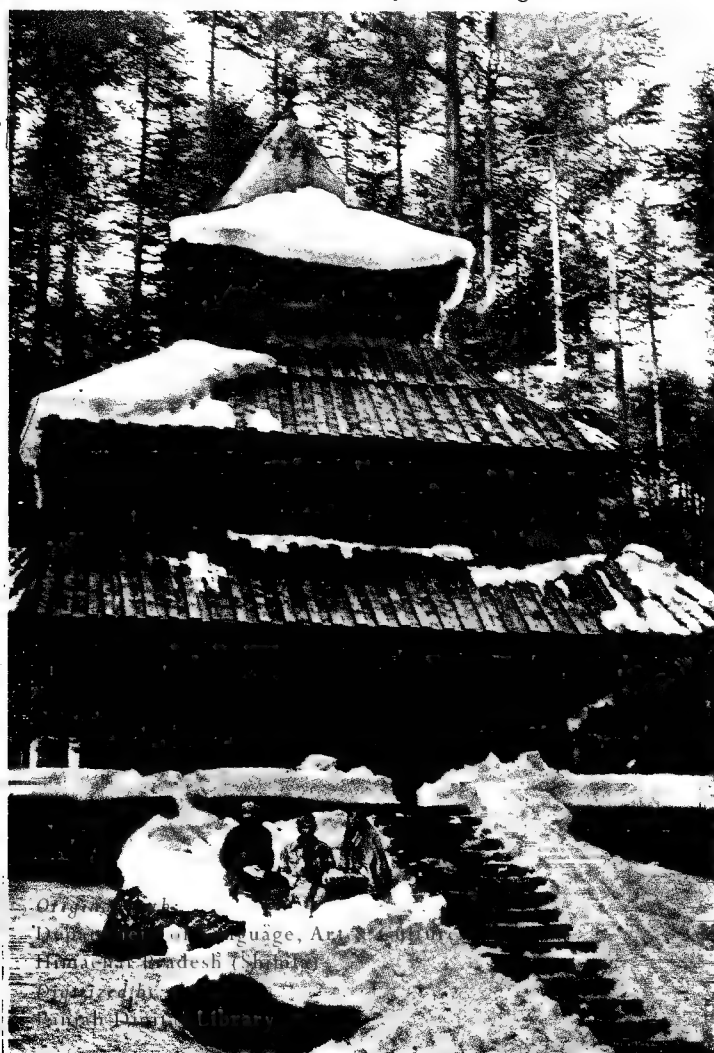


Fig. 7. Close-up of the same Karjan ratha.

emerged which we offer hereafter, which is of course open to discussion since we believe this is a first attempt based on a rather restricted number of objects.

My own contribution is modest. I guided and sponsored Dr. K. Mankodi and Prof. A. Neven but it was hardly necessary for me to infuse the team with my enthusiasm, as the subject in itself was most challenging and rewarding. Practically nothing had been written on "the masks of Chamba and Kullu" as they were referred to until now. We progressed from discovery to discovery and the puzzle commenced to fall into place.

Dr. Mankodi has concentrated his attention on the historical background of Himachal Pradesh. He has attempted to rebuild the art history of this little known part of India for which records are scanty. He has made use of sculptures and documents which we publish here for the first time.

7. See below, pp. 297.

8. Here we must thank Dr. (Mrs.) Shobhana Gokhale of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune, for her help in the decipherment of some inscriptions.





Fig. 9. The Mahādeva temple at the tiny village of Behena in the valley of the Ani river, a tributary of the Sutlej, where we discovered mohras of the classical type not known

before, some of which will require further study because of their early date and unusual type.

Prof. Neven, who excels in comparisons and elaboration of theories, has attempted to classify the various styles regionwise (Beas, Sutlej and Ravi) and by chronology, as confirmed by the epigraphic documents we were able to gather.

These studies enlarge considerably the knowledge we had so far concerning the arts of Himachal Pradesh. They place them back into the general context of Indian Art in a refreshingly novel manner. In fact, the total results of these studies go beyond our expectations.

I hope you will share the thrill of our discoveries, excuse the lacunae, consider the theories we have perhaps too audaciously constructed and forgive our conclusions which may be too hasty. We are open to controversy, which we welcome. You will agree, however, that the documents at our disposal were worth publishing.

Further work will be required to learn more about these *devatās* since only a few dozen ancient ones are known from the thousands cast in the last ten or twelve centuries of their apparent existence.

Most have been melted to make new ones, as the villagers often say. However, there are still many in the *bhandars* attached to most temples, where they are said to be piled up and brought out once in a while for the fairs of *Dussehra* or *Śivarātri*. Is it necessary to mention here how important it is, for the preservation of the cultural heritage of India, that the Archaeological Survey of India should record the content of these *bhandars* with the active collaboration of the local authorities? Photographs of all the *devatās* still existing should be taken before they are melted to produce new ones or plundered for their silver or antique value. Such photographs would go a long way to one day establish a better chronology of their antiquity, also to know perhaps how and when the cult started, and to what the rites observed when they travel to the fairs correspond, which today seem to be only traditional and routine.

Another interesting outcome of our study of the brasses of Himachal is that we came across a number of modern versions of ancient *mohras*, their number becoming increasingly larger as we progressed. Several collectors complained of having



been cheated since they had to pay very high prices for, let us use the right word, fakes.

The dealers had come all the way from Delhi to sell well-imitated folk bronzes, and, since a few years, large masks, polished to such an extent that they are as worn out as centuries-old bronzes.

Sometimes the fakes are pure reproductions of ancient bronzes, sometimes they contain an addition or two which make them "original", sometimes details of an older bronze are reproduced in a later-date bronze. . . .

At the beginning this puzzled us and misled us to some extent. But the evolution of style is consistent, and fakes could be detected with increasing ease as we progressed. We reproduce some in Part III, Chapter XVIII, with descriptions so that the unwary collector can recognize them. However, we cannot publish those which unfortunately found their way into musea, private collections, auctions and catalogues.

In stride with these studies on *mohras* of Himachal Pradesh, my Company has sponsored other subjects of studies and research, which we publish from time to time to enlarge and diffuse the knowledge of the rich cultural heritage of India.

A task of this magnitude and in a field which was previously unexplored could not have been done without the co-operation of several bodies. Therefore, it is our pleasure to acknowledge the help that we received from the following institutions and individuals:

The Archaeological Survey of India, for permission to photograph the protected monuments in Himachal Pradesh and for supplying some photographs;

The American Institute of Indian Studies, Varanasi, for supply of some photographs;

Shri Mohinder Parkash, an advocate and an amateur archaeologist in Nirmand, for accompanying us to several temples around Nirmand in the Sutlej valley;

Shri T. S. Patyal, Divisional Manager, Himachal Pradesh Forests Corporation, Mandi, for providing information on monuments in

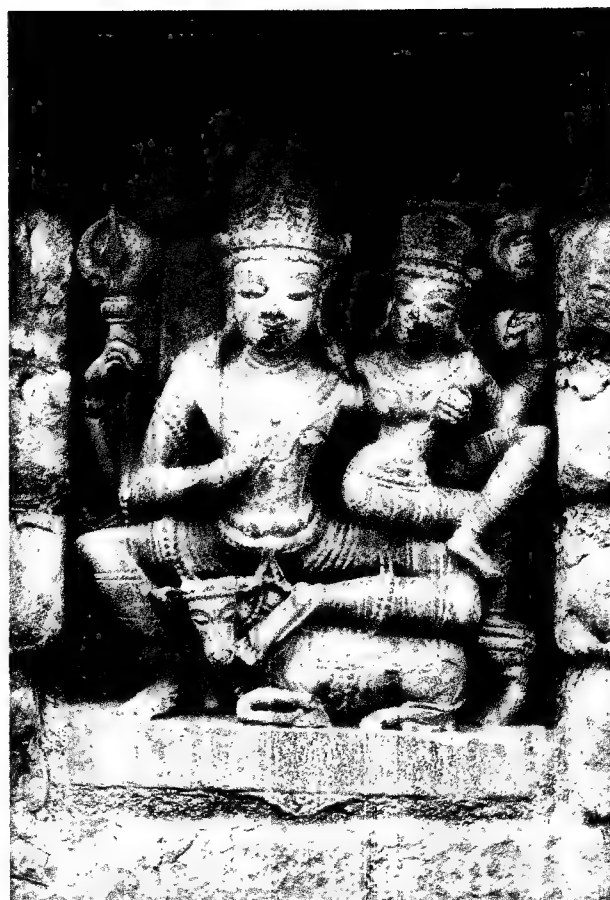


Fig. 10. *Umā-Maheshvara* on the wall of the temple at Baijnath, a large stone temple in Kangra, rebuilt or enlarged several times. The style is now strongly folkish and typical of the fifteenth-sixteenth century.

Mandi and for other assistance;

Shri P. S. Guleria, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Himachal Pradesh Forests Corporation, Mandi, for conducting us to various monuments in Mandi;

Prof. T. C. Thakur of Karjan, Kullu, for accompanying us to various places between Kullu and Manali;

Shri Polo Ram, *pujari* of the temple at Karjan, for his co-operation in allowing us to photograph the inscribed Devī masks and the early wooden sculptures of Karjan-Gajan;

Shri O. C. Sud of Simla for information on wooden temples in Simla district;

Shri Bhag Singh, formerly Superintendent of Police at Kullu, for allowing us to study and photograph the metal images in the custody of the police station at Nirmand;



*Fig. 11. Devatās attending the Śivarātri fair at Mandi greeting each other as they reach the town.*

Dr. V. C. Ohri, Curator of the State Museum, Simla, for providing us with information and assistance.

We sincerely thank the following museums and private collectors who gave us gracious consent to publish their works of art:

The Berlin Museum  
 Los Angeles County Museum of Art  
 The Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena, California  
 Philadelphia Museum of Art  
 The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, Norwich  
 Spink and Son, London  
 Prof. Samuel Eillenberg, London  
 Mr. Jan Miog, The Hague

Mr. Gilles Beguin of Musée Guimet for his encouragements

Dr. Leo Figiel, Atlantis, Florida

Mr. R. H. Ellsworth, New York

Prof. Paul Malet, Clermont-Ferrand, France

Mr. Haridas K. Swali and Mrs. Nalini Swali, Bombay

Mr. Miog not only allowed his collection to be photographed but gave absolute priority to our research. He has permitted us to illustrate as many bronzes from his collection as we liked—and that when his own book is also in the making.

France Chainaye helped A. Neven in making the many proof prints in Brussels in January 1983.

## THE RIVER SYSTEMS OF HIMACHAL

FOUR PRINCIPAL rivers, the Ravi, the Chenab, the Beas and the Sutlej, have contributed in great measure to the fertility of Himachal Pradesh throughout the historical period stretching back to two thousand years.

The Ravi is the ancient Paruṣṇī of the *Rgveda*, Irāvati of later Sanskrit tradition, and Hydraotes of classical Greek geographers. It rises in the Pir Panjal Range, where the boundaries of the Kangra, Kullu and Lahaul-Spiti districts meet. Almost immediately after its rise, the Ravi enters Chamba, following a north-western course through a desolate stretch between the Dhaula Dhar Range on the one hand and some offshoots of the Pir Panjal Range, such as the Mani Mahesh Dhar, on the other. Few habitations occur on this stretch, only pasture lands mark the landscape. The Ravi gathers several tributaries on both its banks. The Dhaula Dhar Range lying parallel to it on its south sends down streams from every spur which contribute their waters to the Ravi on its left. Similarly, on the right hand side, the Ravi collects important tributaries which flow down from the Pir Panjal or Pangri Range and its offshoots. Particularly worth mentioning are the Budhil river which flows into the Ravi from the right or north bank west of Bharmaur, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Brahmapura, and, only a few kilometres further to the west, the river Tundah. After the confluence of

these two streams, the Ravi flows in a westerly direction, past Chhatradi, a village famous for its temple of Śaktidevī, the village being perched at a height of some five hundred metres above the river's level and on its left side. The river maintains the same westerly direction till it reaches Gehra, after which it turns to the north-west and, flowing past Mehla, approaches Chamba situated on the right bank, at a height of about two hundred metres. At Chamba another important rivulet, the Sal or Saho, flows into the Ravi from the north. The river continues to flow to the north-west beyond Chamba, collecting the Siul, by far its largest tributary, and then makes a sharp bend to the south-west past Basohli, this latter stretch marking the boundary of Chamba or Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. The entire length of the Ravi is about nine hundred kilometres.

The Chenab is the ancient Asiknī of the *Rgveda* and the Akisenes of the Greek geographers. The Chenab or Chandrabhaga is in fact the designation that two rivers, the Chandra and the Bhaga, receive after their confluence at Tandi in Lahaul-Spiti district. The Chandra takes its rise south-east of the Baralacha mountains, 5,775 metres above the mean sea level, taking a south-easterly course of over sixty kilometres towards the Bara Shigri Glacier; it then turns abruptly to the right or west and,

describing two arms of a triangle, approaches the Tandi village. The Bhaga rises on the north-west of the same mountains and completes the third arm of the triangle, to combine with the Chandra at Tandi. From this point the Chandrabhaga proceeds to the north and north-west through a desolate valley on both sides of which one can see nothing but great decomposed rocks. At times, high points of the Pangri Range are visible on the left, and, on the right, the even higher and more forbidding Zaskar mountains. Most of the tributaries of the Chandrabhaga come from the Zaskar Range. They include the Miar Nala near Udaipur, the Saicho, and several others. On its left side, the Chandrabhaga receives but few streams of any importance, those emanating from Pangri flowing into the right bank of the Ravi, as we have seen.

The Beas rises on the Rohtang Pass of the Pir Panjal Range north of Manali, lying perpendicular to the Chandra river which flows on the other side of the mountains, and not far from its source. In striking contrast to the Chandra, the landscape of the Beas is both pleasant and varied. For about one hundred kilometres from its source in the Beas Kund, it flows almost due south. Till it reaches the small village of Marhi, it is only a tiny stream; gradually fed by the melting snow of the mountains, it reaches Rahla where it plunges into a deep gorge to be temporarily lost to view. Then, rushing on between mountains lined with pine trees, it reaches Manali.

Within the span of fifty kilometres from Rohtang to Manali, as many as three climatic zones occur, from the alpine of the Rohtang, with rainless, treeless and snowy terrain to the sub-alpine down the Pass, to the temperate zone of Manali-Kullu with typical coniferous trees.

South of Manali the Beas becomes wide and its gradient gentle, but beyond Bajaura low hills again close in on both sides. Between Bajaura and Larji, a stretch of some twenty kilometres, the Beas forms the boundary between Mandi and Kullu, or the Waziri Rupi province of Kullu, to be precise. At Larji, the river runs to the south-west for twenty kilometres up to Pandoh; then it turns to the north-west, past Mandi, beyond which it serves as the boundary between Kangra and Hamirpur districts, and ultimately enters the Punjab plains.

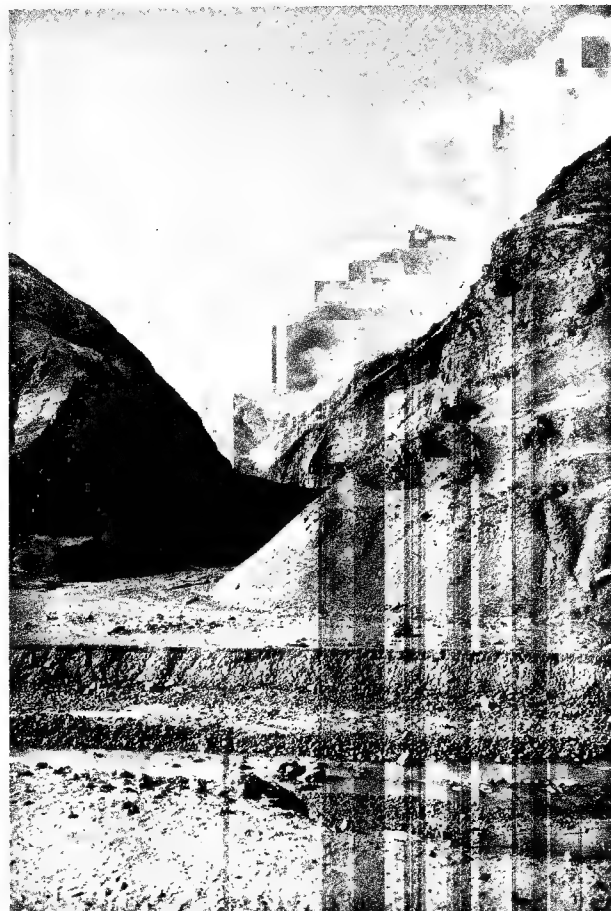


Fig. 13. The river Chandra near Sissu, Lahaul.

The valley of the Beas is fertile; orchards and fields are always in sight, also numerous villages and sacred centres.

The Beas is an ancient river. It was already known to the R̥gvedic Aryans as Vipāśā, and throughout historical times its valley has cradled human settlements, both the Pan-Indian culture imported from the plains as well as an autochthonous tribal culture. Through the entire Beas valley lay a secondary trade route that stretched from the Punjab up to Ladakh in Kashmir, Western Tibet, Central Asia and the Silk Road through China. While this route sustained some trade throughout the centuries, it must have become more prominent when political disturbances made the more direct and arterial westerly trade route from the Punjab through Kashmir and Central Asia impractical. It must be because of its geographical importance, that the valley of the Beas was the tract where the earliest known Himalayan peoples,

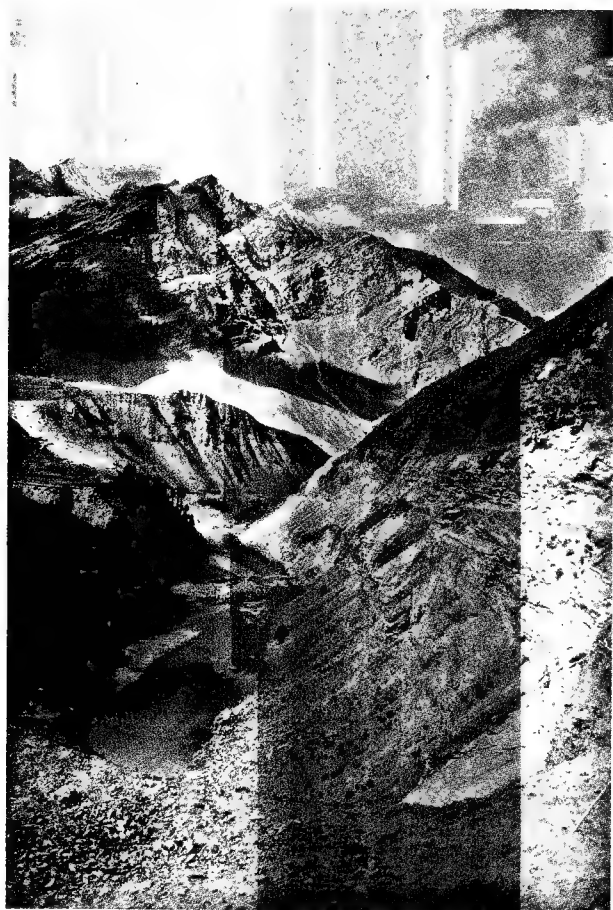


Fig. 14. Snowy landscape, Lahaul.

the Kulūtas, flourished. The Puṣpabhūti, the Maukharis, the Pratiḥāras, Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa of Kashmir and many other kings must no doubt have coveted this valley, above all others. In later times, the Beas valley supported the two prominent states of Kullu and Mandi and also some more minor kingdoms such as that of Suket.

Numerous rivers and minor streams contribute their waters to the Beas.

The Beas first receives the Solang Nala, which has its origin at the foot of Snowy Peak M over 6,500 metres high on the Rohtang Range, to the west of the Rohtang Pass. After a short course of some twenty kilometres, the Solang meets the Beas at Pulchan.

The Phoḃjal Nala rises in the mountains west of Kullu and flows to the south-west, then turns to the south-east and, past Kothi Hurang, it meets

with the Beas south of Katrain. In historical times the Phoḃjal served as the boundary between the two Kullu Waziris of Parol and Lag-Sari.

The Sarvari's source is at the foot of a peak 4,600 metres high in the extreme west of Kullu district adjoining Chhota Bangahal in Mandi. It maintains a steady direction towards the south-east, partly along an old trade route linking Kullu-Sultanpur with the Punjab by the Bubbu Pass, and meets the Beas at Kullu. Its total length is about fifty kilometres; the valley is rather shut in by steep mountains on either side, and sparsely inhabited.

The most important — both on account of the volume of water and also on account of the culture that it supported — is the Parvati. It rises in the wasteland near Mantalai at the foot of a snowy peak (about 6,500 metres) at the south-east extreme of Kullu district, not far from the Pin Parvati Range in Spiti (from the eastern side of which originates the Pin river of Spiti). It has a total course of about one hundred and fifty kilometres, first towards the north-west and then south-west, during which it collects the drainage of the Malana and other glacial streams and, after passing the sacred centre of Manikarn, merges with the Beas on its left bank near the village of Bhuntar. The Parvati valley offers a contrast to the wider and fertile valley of the Beas; it is forbidding on account of the steep and bare mountains which shut it in on either side, and it is much less populated. Beyond Manikarn, however, although the claustrophobic aspect of the valley persists, yet settlements occur, but often they are far removed from the track. The Parvati served as the northern boundary of an administrative division of Kullu, namely the Waziri of Rupi. Old silver mines are situated in this valley.

Among other tributaries on the left side of the Beas are the Hurla, the Sainj, the Tirthan and the Suketi. The Hurla river takes its birth in the hills of the Kot Kandi Dhar. In its south-westerly course of sixty kilometres, it gathers some glacial streams flowing down from that Dhar, to shed its waters into the Beas south of Bajaura. It flows past the village of Garsa, which is probably the same as Makarsa, the unofficial residence of king Bahadur Singh of Kullu in the eighteenth century. The Sainj rises in a vast glacial field in the extreme east of Kullu district — the same field which also feeds the





Fig. 15. The Rohtang Pass, 3,955 metres high above the sea level, in winter. The Rohtang marks the boundary between the Lahaul-Spiti district in the north and

Kullu in the south; it also marks the boundary between the alpine climatic zone on its north and the temperate on the south.

Parvati, and the Pin river of Spiti. It flows almost due west along its entire course of over one hundred kilometres, and serves as the southern border of Waziri Rupi, separating it from the Waziri of Saraj. It receives the drainage of the Tirthan which is almost as large as the Sainj itself, and then flows into the Beas on its left flank, at Larji.

The Tirthan rises in the glacial fields to the south-west of Snowy Peak 1 in the south-eastern corner of Kullu, where the Sirikand Dhar separates Kullu from Simla and Kinnaur. For the first half of its total course of about one hundred kilometres, the Tirthan flows towards the south-west through a desolate terrain, then bears away to the north-west, past Banjar, and meets the Sainj at Larji. For thirty kilometres south of Larji the Tirthan serves as the boundary between Mandi district on the one hand and Saraj in Kullu; thereafter, the southern extension of the boundary is carried on by the Bah, a tributary of the Tirthan.

The Uhl originates in the mountains of the Dhaula Dhar Range which rise to about 5,000 metres, and waters Mandi. Throughout its deeply wooded but sparsely inhabited course of 125 kilometres, which is nearly as long as that of the Parvati, it flows parallel to the Ghoghar Dhar Range of Mandi, reproducing its 'S' shape. It collects drainage from many rivulets of Chhota Bangahal and Chuhar tracts, to merge with the Beas some eight kilometres east of Mandi town.

Already known to the R̥gvedic Aryans as the Śatadru, the Sutlej takes its birth in the Manasarovar lake in Tibet some three hundred kilometres east of the Indo-Tibet border. It follows a south-west course into India passing through the Kinnaur and Simla districts; after reaching Tattapani near Narkanda, the Sutlej moves to the north-west past Bilaspur where it flows into the artificial Govindsagar reservoir. For the first few hundred kilometres of its journey and even after entering

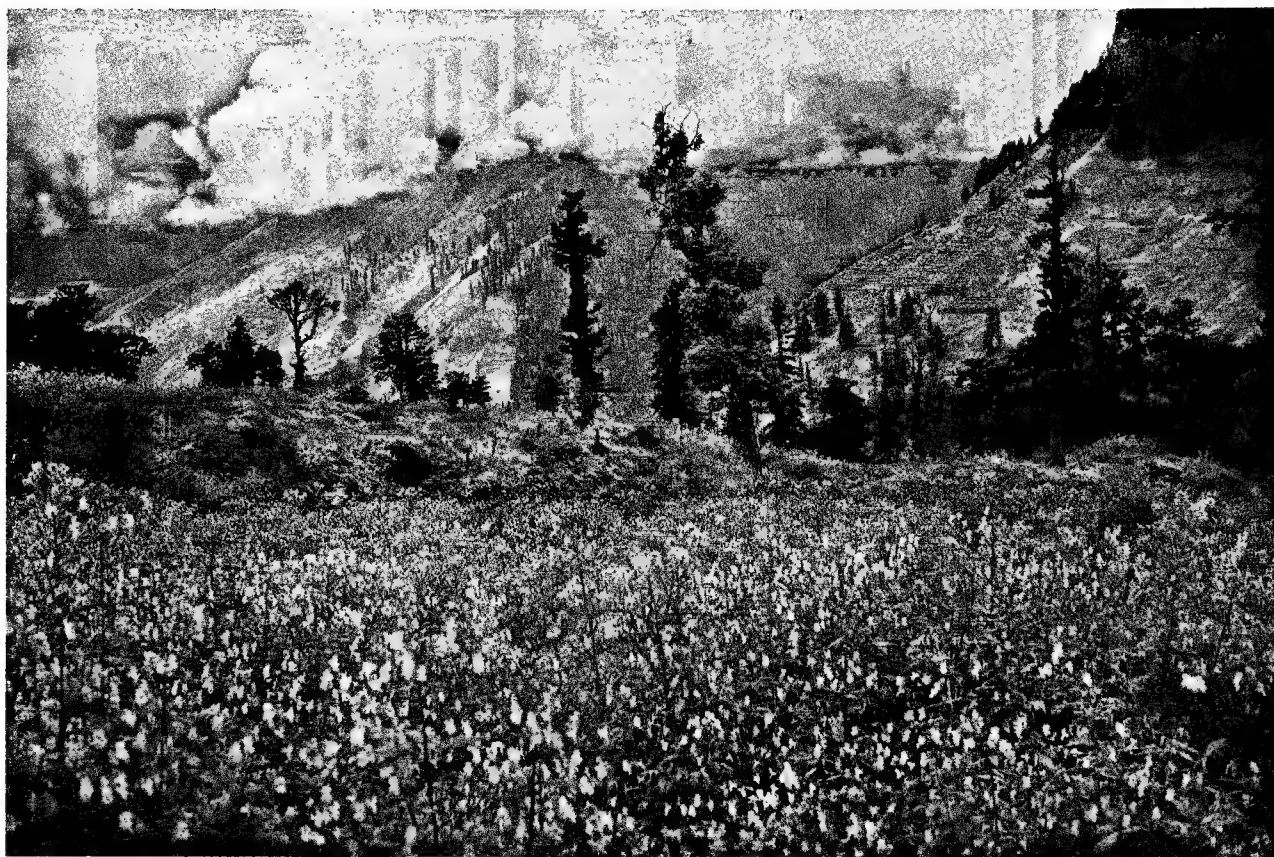


Fig. 16. The road from Manali to Rohtang in the month of August. This scene, only a few kilometres south of the

Rohtang, dramatically illustrates the changed climatic zone.

Kinnaur, the Sutlej traverses through rocky terrain with high peaks looking down upon it from either side, but from Sarahan, in the territory of the former Rampur-Bushahr state, presently Simla district, there is a dramatic change of scene. The valley broadens out, the soil is fertile, therefore richly cultivated. Numerous streams, small and big, meet the Sutlej on either side throughout its course. The most important is the Spiti river, which takes its birth in the Bara Shigri Glacier around the Kunzung-la and contributes its water from the north, but it is beyond the scope of this book. Also important is the Ani river in Kullu, which meets the Sutlej near Luhri, west of Nogli. One can also mention the Kurpan stream which flows past the ancient town of Nirmand and falls into the Sutlej somewhere near Nogli on the right side.

A range of mountains from the border of the Simla and Kinnaur districts, running parallel to the Sutlej, along the left or south, forms the watershed

between the Sutlej and the Yamuna. Rivers such as the Pabar and the Giri, both perennial streams, originate on the slopes of this range, and ultimately merge with the Yamuna.

The Pabar takes its birth in mountains about five thousand metres above the mean sea level on the south-eastern extreme of the Simla Range and flows to the south-west up to Rohru, where it changes its direction, now proceeding towards the south-east, past the sacred centre of Hatkoti; then, entering Uttar Pradesh, it merges with the Tons, its total length being about one hundred kilometres.

The Giri originates in the slopes between the Simla and Chur Ranges in Simla district, flows towards the south-west, collecting the entire drainage of both these ranges; for part of its course, it defines the boundary between the Simla and Sirmaur districts, when it turns sharply to the south-east to enter Sirmaur district, and merges with the

Yamuna near Paonta Saheb. Its entire length is between 125 and 150 kilometres.

Of all the river valleys of Himachal Pradesh, that of the Beas is most favourably situated, as a look at the map given at the end of this Volume will reveal. Running from the north to the south, this valley cuts deeply across the Himalayan mountain system, which as we know, stretches from the south-east to the north-west. Throughout history, the valley of the Beas provided easy access from the plains of the Punjab to Ladakh, Yarkand and

beyond, over the Rohtang Pass. The valley is considerably broad in both Kullu and Mandi districts and witnessed the growth of two important kingdoms in earlier times.

A trade route branching from the Beas at the present village of Aut proceeded over the Jalauri Pass to Nirmand, Rampur-Bushahr, Sarahan and on to Tibet. Numerous monuments, some of which would be discussed in the following chapters, testify the wealth of this tract even to the present day.

*Fig. 12. Snowy mountains of Kinnaur as seen from Narkanda in Simla district.*



## A HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

## THE EARLY PERIOD

FEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL remains of early historical period have so far been found in Himachal Pradesh, but some idea can be formed with the help of literature. The *Mahābhārata* provides the earliest references to the people who inhabited the present Himachal Pradesh, by naming several *janapadas*, tribal kingdoms and republics, such as the Audumbaras, the Trigartas, the Kulūtas and the Kulindas. According to the account of the *Mahābhārata*, when the Pāṇḍavas were in exile in the Himalayas after they lost their kingdom to Duryodhana in the game of dice, the kings of the Audumbaras brought their tributes to Yudhiṣṭhira; the Trigartas were defeated by Arjuna on his *digvijaya* expedition; and later, the Kulūtas and the Kulindas fought on the side of the Kauravas in the great Mahābhārata war.

In the fourth century before Christ, Pāṇini in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī* named the confederacy of the six tribes of Trigartas who lived by the force of their arms, that is, were of war-like character (*āyudhajīvi*). The term Trigarta denotes the valleys of the three major rivers of Himachal Pradesh, the Ravi, the Beas and the Sutlej. This extensive and fertile tract, which partly lies in Himachal Pradesh and partly in present-day Punjab, played an important part throughout the history of the north-west of India. The capital of Trigarta was Jālandhara, now in the Punjab, the term Trigarta being often used as a

synonym for Jālandhara. The Trigartas, along with the other *janapadas*, would continue to be mentioned in later literature in the lists of *janapadas* and rivers of the north-west contained in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* or the *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Vāyu*, *Bhāgavata*, *Matsya* and other *Purāṇas*.

The Maurya empire founded in the fourth century before Christ probably included parts of Himachal Pradesh. According to a tradition preserved in Jain literature, Candragupta Maurya's advisor Kauṭilya received support of Parvataka, king of Himalaya, when Candragupta uprooted the Nanda dynasty of Magadha and founded his own kingdom. The same tradition is at the basis of the plot of Viśākhadatta's play entitled the *Mudrārākṣasa*: according to this play, Kauṭilya, after establishing Candragupta on the throne, arranged for Parvataka's assassination instead of granting to him his share in return for the help. Parvataka's son, Malayaketu, then sought assistance from the Kulūta king, Citravarma, and joined hands with the displaced Nanda king's minister Rākṣasa. Ultimately, however, Malayaketu's kingdom in the Himalayas was restored to him, and he probably ruled as a Maurya vassal.

During the reign of Candragupta's grandson Aśoka, the Maurya empire must have extended up to the Himalayas, for one set of his fourteen rock

edicts is located at Kalsi, on the confluence of the river Tons with the Yamuna, on the border of Himachal Pradesh with Uttar Pradesh. Evidence for Mauryan influence in the Himalayas comes from another quarter, too. According to the Ceylonese Buddhist chronicle, the *Dīpavaṃsa*, Aśoka deputed five missionary monks, Kāsapagota, Majhima, Dundubhisara, Sahadeva and Mūlakadeva, to propagate Buddhism to the peoples of the Himalayas: though these tribes are simply called the Yakkas, or Yakṣas, in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, some of them may well have been the same *janapadas* and peoples as those mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and later literature. Interestingly, this Buddhist literary tradition is supported by the independent evidence of archaeology. For, caskets containing the relics of Buddhist saints found in Stūpa 2 at Sanchi and in another *stūpa* at Sonari, in Madhya Pradesh, are inscribed with the names of ten teachers, which include Majhima, Dundubhisara and Kāsapagota — and the latter is specifically described, in the Sanchi record, as “the preacher of the entire Himavat” (*savahaimavatācāriya*).

We get a glimpse into the races which must have populated this territory in the lists of the *janapadas* or tribes recorded in later literature; besides the *Mahābhārata*, Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, the *Purāṇas*, such as the *Vāyu*, *Vāmana*, *Bhāgavata*, *Bhaviṣya* and *Mārkaṇḍeya*, and the *Brhatsaṃhitā* have preserved lists of *janapadas* inhabiting the Himalayas. From this literature, we can conjure a picture of the society in the Himalayas in the last centuries before and the first two centuries after the beginning of the Christian era.

After the collapse of the Mauryas and the Śuṅgas who followed them, in the second-first centuries before Christ, many Indo-Greek kings ruled in the Punjab and in north-west India in general, and some may have even extended their territories to include parts of Himachal Pradesh, but nothing specific can be said. But we do know that, between that date and the fourth century A.D., the ancient *janapadas*, temporarily submerged under the imperial Magadhan dynasties, again flourished. Apart from literature, our main evidence is in the form of coins which do not only identify these tribes from their inscriptions but also determine their territories from their distribution.

The ancient *janapada* of the Kuṇindas or Kulin-das is known from the *Mahābhārata*, the *Brhatsaṃhitā* and the *Purāṇas*, which all enumerate it along with the people of the north-eastern parts of India. In the *Mahābhārata*, they are the neighbours of the Trigartas of the western Himachal Pradesh. The Kuṇindas are known to archaeology through their numerous coins which have been found in Ludhiana, Karnal and Ambala in the Punjab and Haryana, and Hamirpur and Kangra in H.P. and as far to the east as Saharanpur in U.P. The Kuṇindas must have inhabited an extensive tract at the foot of the Siwalik hills between the Beas and the Sutlej and between the Sutlej and the Yamuna. Their coins belong to two groups, of different periods, the earlier group of coins, of both silver and copper, using both Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī scripts. All the known coins were issued by only one king Amoghabhūti, and have been placed about the beginning of the Christian era. It has been suggested that these coins were intended to compete with the later Indo-Greek coinage. It is likely that after Amoghabhūti's death, both his kingdom and his coinage were submerged under the Śaka and Kuṣāṇa invasions. Nearly three centuries later, we come across some more coins issued by the Kuṇinda *janapada*, known as the Chatterśvara coins. Later, the Kuṇindas probably merged with the Yaudheyas. In the fourth century A.D. Samudragupta in his Allahabad pillar inscription enumerated the Yaudheyas, locating them, probably, along the frontiers of his empire, but there is no mention of the Kuṇindas, though the name probably survives in the modern Kanet tribe which inhabits the Simla and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh. It has also been suggested that the Amoghabhūti and the Chatterśvara coins may not be two or three centuries apart, but may be from a more or less continuous period.

The Audumbaras were an ancient tribe, mentioned in the *Ganapāṭha* of Pāṇini, in the *Mahābhārata*, in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, in the *Brhatsaṃhitā* and other early literature. Their history can, perhaps, be stretched back further. For they, along with the Madrakāras, the Yugandharas and others, are enumerated in an early text as constituting the six limbs of the Śālva people. Now the Śālvas are mentioned in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, and the Madrakāras and the Yugandharas in other Vedic texts; hence it is probable that the antiquity



of the Audumbaras, too, can be stretched back to the Vedic period.

The coins of the Audumbaras, however, have been dated to a period between the second century B.C. and the first century A.D. As large numbers of them were found in Kangra, Pathankot and Hoshiarpur, their habitat is believed to be the tract between the lower courses of the Sutlej and the Ravi in Himachal Pradesh and the Punjab. The Audumbaras were a monarchical state; names of kings such as Dharaghoṣa, Rudradāsa, Śivadāsa and Mahādeva are known from their coins. It is interesting to note that the bearded figure of the Ṛṣi Viśvāmitra, identified by a legend, occurs among the motifs on the Audumbara coins, for, according to tradition, Viśvāmitra, indeed, was the patron sage of the Audumbaras.

The Audumbara territory was situated on the ancient route connecting Takṣaśilā and Magadha, at a point where several Himalayan valleys opened into the Punjab plains. This must have resulted in great economic prominence for the tribe. The Audumbaras disappeared from history in the first century A.D.

The Kulūtas, mentioned in the *Brhatsamhitā*, the *Mahābhārata*, and in other literature, inhabited the valley of the upper course of the Beas river, to which they gave their name. In the *Mahābhārata* they are mentioned along with other northern peoples, such as the Kāśmīras, the Gandhāras, and the Sindhu-Sauvīras, and the *Brhatsamhitā* includes them in the lists of the peoples of the north-east and north-west India. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who travelled in the valley between 629 and 645 A.D., recorded the circuit of the Kulūta country as being about 500 miles. Twelve coins of the Kulūta tribe are known; they were all excavated or picked up in Taxila or the Punjab, and none in the present-day Kullu proper, and record the names of two kings, Virayaśas and Vijayamitra. These are of copper and their legends are in Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī scripts, datable to the first century.

Both the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Mudrārākṣasa* of the seventh century A.D., which mention a Kulūta king, describe them as Mlecchas, outside the pale of Brahmanism or Aryan culture, or foreigners. However, by the first century of the Christian era

the Kulūtas had become Hinduised, as both their names, and the symbols on their coins suggest.

Thus, for two centuries before and two centuries after the beginning of the Christian era, the history of Himachal Pradesh can only be traced in the barest of outlines. Little can be said about the spread of the several foreign dynasties who established their rule in the north-west, such as first the Indo-Greeks, then the Śakas and the Kuṣāṇas, into Himachal Pradesh, but it is possible that foreign and Indian rules dovetailed in some parts of the state at different periods.

In 320 A.D., the Gupta dynasty was founded in Magadha. Its founder Candragupta I conquered the whole of Bihar, and parts of Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. His son Samudragupta, who was on the throne in 350 A.D., recorded an elaborate account of his political and military career in his Allahabad pillar inscription from which we learn that the Gupta empire extended in the north and north-west up to Punjab and along the Himalayan foot-hills.

Samudragupta was followed by his son Candragupta II in 375 or 380 A.D., who further enlarged the empire. His coins have been found in the Punjab and it is more than probable that he ruled over parts of the present Himachal Pradesh. This king has been identified by some scholars with the king Candra of the Delhi Iron Pillar inscription which credits that ruler with having crossed the seven mouths of the river Sindhu and conquered Bāhlika or Balkh/Bacteria. His successors Kumāragupta (414-455 A.D.) retained the empire intact, and Skandagupta (455-467 A.D.), the last imperial Gupta of Magadha, fought a victorious war against the Hūṇa invaders from the north-west.

The Hūṇas were a Central Asian tribe with a history of violent migrations which stretched back to the second century before Christ. They appeared in India several times during the early periods, and were even known to the epics. The *Purāṇas* enumerate them with other mountain tribes of the north-west, such as the Kulūtas and the Kāśmīras. In the second half of the fifth century A.D., when Skandagupta was on the throne, the Hūṇas invaded Gandhāra from the north-west, but Skandagupta thwarted their invasion into India



proper. Persia, however, succumbed before their onslaughts, and the Hūṇas established themselves there and in Gandhāra. After Skandagupta's death, a Hūṇa chief Toramāṇa extended his power into India, conquering the Punjab and even as far east as Eran in the Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh. He was succeeded by his son Mihirakula. Several sources indicate to their power in the Punjab and Kashmir, and it is possible that a part of Himachal Pradesh also came under their influence. Toramāṇa's coins have been found in the Punjab, and his inscription from Kura in the Salt Range also proves his reign in that territory, but it must be remembered that more than one Hūṇa chieftain may have had the name or title of Toramāṇa. Sung Yun, a Chinese ambassador to Gandhāra in 520 A.D. recorded that Gandhāra was continually at war with Kashmir. The king referred to may be either Toramāṇa, or more probably, his son Mihirakula. Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* also records that both Toramāṇa and Mihirakula ruled in Gandhāra and Kashmir, though their sequence has been reversed, Mihirakula occurring first in the narrative, to be followed after several other kings by Toramāṇa.

The earliest direct inscriptional evidence of any local political power from within Himachal Pradesh itself, after the Kulūta coins (which, however, were found outside the limits of the state) is a damaged rock inscription at village Salri on the border of Mandi and Kullu, which records that one Mahārāja Śrī Caṇḍeśvarahastin, son of Mahārāja Īśvarahastin, probably of the Vatsa *gotra*, conquered a king, whose name may be read as Rajjilabala, and founded a town, probably called Sālipurī. The inscription has been dated on palaeographic grounds to the fourth-fifth century, but it has not yet been properly edited. It is not known whether Śrī Caṇḍeśvarahastin was an independent ruler or a vassal of some superior power, such as the imperial Guptas of Magadha, but his title of Mahārāja indicates the former alternative. But no Hastin dynasty is known in Kullu from any other sources.

The names of four kings who ruled in Nirmaṇḍa, presently called Nirmand, in the Kullu district, in the sixth-seventh century, are available from a copper-plate still preserved in the village. All are given the titles of Mahāsāmanta and Mahārāja. Their

names are Varuṇasena, Sañjayasena, Raviṣeṇa and Samudrasena. The plate records its date as the year 6, which may refer to the Śāstra era, which was current in the north-west of India, and on palaeographic grounds it has been ascribed to the seventh century A.D. The inscription also confirms an earlier grant made by a Mahārāja Śarva, who probably was the overlord of Samudrasena's house, as he is given the superior title of Mahārāja; this Śarva may be the same as Śarvavarman, the Maukhari king who was ruling in Kanauj between 565 and 580 A.D., thus, earlier to Samudrasena and the Nirmand plate.

The Maukharis, who became a prominent power in the sixth century, were an ancient clan. They were already known to Pāṇini in the fourth century B.C. A clay seal of Maurya age from Gaya, an inscription of 239 A.D. from Kota in Rajasthan, and four other records on sacrificial pillars (*yūpas*) from Rajasthan, also of the third century, reveal that members of the clan were spread over an extensive area. The later Maukhari dynasty claimed to have descended from king Aśvapati of Madra or Central Punjab, of the *Mahābhārata* era. In the middle of the sixth century, when the Gupta empire became weak, the Maukhari king Īśānavarman is supposed to have expanded his kingdom at the cost of the Guptas, their erstwhile overlords. Īśānavarman was the first ruler of the family to assume the title of Mahārājādhirāja. He or his son Śarvavarman fought with the Hūṇas who were settled in Kashmir and north-western India. It would, therefore, not be surprising if their territory extended up to the Sutlej river in Himachal Pradesh. If so, the dynasty of Samudrasena of Nirmaṇḍa may, indeed, have been feudatories of the Maukharis.

In the last quarter of the sixth century, another empire was founded in North India, that of the Puṣpabhūti of Sthāṇvīśvara, modern Thanesar, fifty kilometres south of Ambala in Haryana. The *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa provides us with much information about this period, especially about the reign of the emperor Harṣavardhana, who ruled from 606 to 648 A.D. Harṣa's father Prabhākara-vardhana, who must have been on the throne in the last quarter of the sixth century, was the first Puṣpabhūti king to acquire the title of Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja, "supreme lord, king of kings". Bāṇa glorifies Prabhākara-vardhana's



Fig. 17. The rock-cut temple, Masrur, Kangra district. Eighth-ninth century. A solitary instance of rock-cut architecture in Himachal, it carries forward the tradition of

military adventures in very general terms, that he was like a lion to the Hūṇa deer, a fever to the king of Sindhu, etc., but no specific achievements are attributed to him. The limits of Hūṇa territories extended to northern Punjab as we have seen, and probably to the foot-hills of the Himalayas, and Prabhākaravardhana may have crossed swords with them. At one place it is said that when Prabhākara-vardhana sent his son Rājyavardhana against the Hūṇas, the prince spent several days on the lap of the Himālaya. Probably Prabhākaravardhana's kingdom may have been bounded by the Beas in the west and by the Yamuna or the Ganga in the east, and may have extended up to the Himalayas. This conclusion follows from Bāṇa's statement about his inimical relationship with Sindhu, Hūṇa, Gandhāra on the one hand, to the north and west of his kingdom, and Lāṭa, Yavana and Gurjara on the other hand, to the south. Thus, along the foot-hills of the Himalayas the Hūṇas, Puṣpabhūti Prabhākaravardhana of Sthāṇvīśvara and Maukhari Īśānavarman and Śarvavarman of Kanauj may have ruled, partly as contemporaries and perhaps also as contenders.

In about 606 A.D., Prabhākaravardhana's son Harṣavardhana succeeded him to the throne of

peninsular India. Only a royal patron could undertake such ambitious work: The names of Yaśovarman of Kanauj, (eighth century), or some Pratīhāra King come to mind.

Sthāṇvīśvara. Harṣa's period is well documented, for, besides Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, some inscription of Harṣa himself, and the account of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang who toured through Harṣa's empire between 630 and 644 A.D., are also available. Harṣa's sister Rājyaśrī was married to king Grahavarman, son of Avantivarman, the Maukhari king of Kanauj. Soon after Harṣa ascended the throne at Sthāṇvīśvara, Grahavarman was killed in a war with the king of Mālava. As Grahavarman had left no heir, Harṣa ruled over Kanauj, first as regent for his sister, and later became the full-fledged king of the joint kingdoms of Kanauj and Sthāṇvīśvara, and shifted his capital to Kanauj.

Harṣa conducted several military campaigns in the early years of his rule, and at least retained intact the territories of the two kingdoms which he had inherited. Hiuen Tsang mentions the kingdoms of Jālandhara, Śatadru (the Sutlej valley) and Kulūta, but it is not known if they formed part of Harṣa's empire, for the Chinese pilgrim does not mention their political status. But Himachal Pradesh, and the valley of the Beas river, was on an ancient trade route to Tibet, and a powerful emperor like Harṣa must have tried to annex the territory in order to control Himalayan trade.

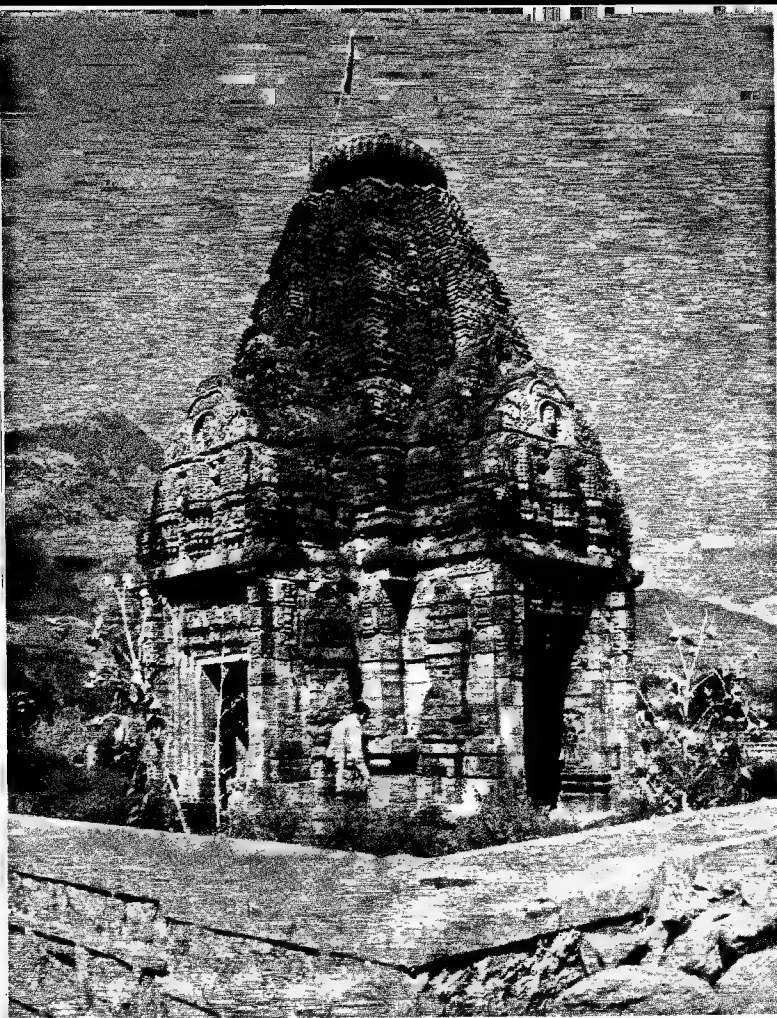


Fig. 18. Viśveśvara temple, Bajaura, Kullu. Circa ninth or tenth century. The Pratihāra empire of Kanauj extended in the north into the Himalayas, and with it came the style of temple architecture.

After Harṣa's death in 648 A.D., for some fifty years no information is available about either Thanesar or Kanauj, but around 700 A.D. we find the emperor Yaśovarman in possession of a vast empire with his capital at Kanauj. A Prakrit work entitled *Gauḍavaho*, "The Killing of the Gauḍa King", and written by Vākpati, narrates Yaśovarman's military exploits, but his parentage or his antecedents before coming to the throne are not recorded. According to Vākpati, Yaśovarman carried out expeditions to the west of Kanauj into Śrikanṭha or Thanesar and also in the Himalayas. Yaśovarman's period coincided with the Arab inroads into India. At first Yaśovarman allied himself with the contemporary king of Kashmir, Lalitāditya Mukṭāpīḍa, to offer a joint front to the invaders, but the two soon fell out, Lalitāditya emerging as the undisputed overlord of a vast empire extending from Kashmir to Kanauj and beyond.

The history of North India from the eighth to the tenth century of the Christian era was dominated by the powerful house of the Gurjara Pratihāras, who ruled first from Ujjayinī and later from Kanauj. At the height of their power, their empire included the entire North India (with the exception of Bengal) from the Vindhya up to the Himalayas. We do not know the exact extent of the kingdom of Nāgabhaṭa I, the first prominent ruler of the house, but Vatsarāja, who, according to a later record, forcibly snatched the kingdom from the Bhaṇḍi family, could count Kanauj among his possessions, for this Bhaṇḍi has been identified with the maternal uncle of Harṣa, whose name was also Bhaṇḍi, and who ruled from Kanauj. At about the same time that Vatsarāja was ruling, Kanauj and the Ganga-Yamuna basin became the centre of attraction of as many as three contemporary powers — the Gurjara Pratihāras themselves, the Pāla king Dharmapāla of Bengal and his successors, and the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Dhruva and his descendants. Vatsarāja was the first to acquire Kanauj, but before he could entrench himself there, Dharmapāla wrested it from his hands and held a consecration ceremony at Kanauj which was attended among others, by the kings of Kīra and Kuru, that is, Kangra and Thanesar. Vatsarāja suffered also at the hands of the third claimant, the Rāṣṭrakūṭa Dhruva. After this, nothing more is heard about Vatsarāja. His successor Nāgabhaṭa II also came into conflict with the Kirātas, probably some primitive tribe of the Himalayas, but it cannot be ascertained from which part. Although the fortunes of the Gurjara Pratihāras fluctuated, at least so much is certain that the empires of Nāgabhaṭa II (died 833 A.D.), Bhoja (ca 835-862 A.D.), Mahendrapāla (865-908 A.D.) and Mahipāla (912-942 A.D.) extend up to the Himalayas. Mahipāla's court poet Rājaśekhara enumerated the Kulūtas among the peoples defeated by that king.

Pāla influence over Kanauj (and by extension, over North India) may be inferred from the fact that he uprooted the Pratihāra protégé Indrāyudha, and in his place installed Cakrāyudha. His son Devapāla is supposed to have defeated the Hūṇas of Uttarāpatha and won tributes from all the kings of North India, but little weight can be given to such general claims.



Fig. 19. Brass Nandi. About one half of life size. Facing the (reconstructed) Maṇi Maheśa temple, Bharmaur. Circa seventh century A.D. Brass images of Lakṣaṇādevī, Gaṇeśa and this Nandi here at Bharmaur, and of Śaktidevī at Chhatra-

di bear records of the king Meruvarman of the Brahmapura dynasty and of Gugga, the image maker. Cast in several separate pieces which were then joined together, this Nandi in its stiff angular form introduces the local style of this area.

## THE LATER PERIOD: KULLU VALLEY

A late text called the *Kulāntapīṭhamāhātmya* which pretends to form part of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* seeks to derive the modern name of Kulu or Kullu from a supposed Sanskrit original *Kulāntapīṭha*, signifying that the province is situated at the end of the habitable world (*kulānta*). Considering the mountainous character of the district, in which many of the highest peaks are well over five thousand metres above the sea level, and considering also the desolation of Lahaul and Spiti which lie beyond Kullu, this explanation may well appeal to the popular imagination, but there is no authority to recommend it. The true derivation, however, is from Kulūta, which was the name of the people inhabiting the upper valley of the Beas as early as the first century of the Christian era, whose coins were found in the Punjab, and whose name is preserved in the lists of peoples in early literature. As late as the tenth century, Rājasekhara, the court poet of the Gurjara-Pratihāra emperor Mahīpāla of Kanauj, recorded the name of the Kulūtas as having offered tributes. But the word *Kulāntapīṭha* occurs nowhere in literature, and thus it is clear that the

popular derivation of Kullu is only a fanciful attempt.

For the first millenium of the Christian era, as we have seen, Himachal Pradesh very probably formed part of, or at least came under the influence of, successive imperial dynasties that ruled from the Gangetic plains of northern India. It is possible that those dynasties did not rule directly, but allowed the local rulers to administer their territories in the mountain fastnesses, and for the most part the local rulers, after offering allegiance, carried on their affairs independently. Two such local houses, that of Mahārāja Caṇḍeśvarahastin of Mandi-Kullu, and that of Mahāsāmanta Mahārāja Samudrasena of Nirmand, are already known to us.

After the eclipse of the Gurjara-Pratihāras, the last indigenous Indian empire, we perceive a change in the history of Himachal Pradesh. In Kullu, the continuous rule of a native dynasty is recorded which ruled without reference to any outside overlord. The sources for this later period are different. While for the history of the early period

the sources were literature, a few Sanskrit inscriptions and coins, for the more "historical", later period as far as Kullu is concerned, the sources are of a different kind. Sanskrit literature and inscriptions are no longer available, with the exception of the late *Kulāntapūṭhamāhātmya* allegedly forming part of the *Brahmaṇḍapurāṇa* (an examination of the Purāṇa, however, does not confirm this claim). Vernacular sources come into prominence, the most comprehensive of these being the royal genealogy, the *Bansāvali* of the kings of Kullu, who ruled from Jagatsukh, Naggar and Sultanpur. Next come the inscriptions on the temples and *devatā* masks; for the earlier part of the second period they were mostly written in the Śāradā script, and for the later part till about the first decade of the present century, in the Tākri or Devāṣeṣa script. Most of these later records have never been studied or even documented. Their search, and a proper documentation, are urgently needed.

The *Bansāvali*, which was published by A.F.P. Harcourt in his *Himalayan Districts of Kooloo, Lahoul and Spiti* (1871) but which is no longer available, claims to bridge both the early and later periods of Kullu's history; for while the last Kullu ruler flourished in the nineteenth century A.D., the first one, the founder of the dynasty, is presented in the genealogy as having lived at a remote period. But reliable dates begin to be mentioned in that source only from the fifteenth century, and in the absence of corroborative evidence we cannot make any conclusions regarding the events recorded in the genealogy for the early kings, and their actual dates; but if the number of kings listed as having ruled is to be taken as true, then the Kullu dynasty would stretch back to the early centuries A.D.

The *Bansāvali* records the names of eighty-eight kings who ruled in Kullu. These eighty-eight kings are all said to have belonged to one and the same dynasty, there having been no change of dynasty throughout the entire period, although the kingdom did not always pass down from father to son. The first seventy-three kings had the suffix Pāl; the seventy-fourth, Siddha Pāl, added Singh to his name, and Siddha Pāl Singh's fourteen successors retained only the Singh suffix. This long line of eighty-eight kings ruled with varying fortunes from as many as three capitals, Jagatsukh, Naggar and Sultanpur-Kullu. Occasional references to the

kings in the few temple records, in other inscriptions, and above all, in the *devatā* mask inscriptions corroborate the names of the kings mentioned in the *Bansāvali*. According to this source, Bihangamani Pāl, who originally hailed from Prayāga, settled down in Kullu after first temporarily staying in Almora and Māyāpurī (or Haridvar). When Bihangamani Pāl first arrived in Kullu, he is likely to have found the land divided amongst petty chieftains, Ranas (ancient Rājānakas) or Thakurs. In fact, these have persisted throughout the history and paid tribute to their local overlords and helped them in fighting wars; occasionally they ignored the superior power.

As far as the inscriptions of the later period of Kullu's history are concerned, even an elementary survey has not been done. Copper-plates and stone inscriptions which characterize the early period of Indian history everywhere gradually fade out. In their place, we find dedicatory records on wooden temples and hundreds of brief inscriptions carved on metal *mohras* of *devatās* scattered in the villages of the district.

Inscriptions on temples, copper-plates and the inscribed *mohras* include the following:

- (1) A record of Udhran Pāl, the seventy-second king, in the Sandhyādevī temple at Jagatsukh, dated 1428 A.D. (This cannot be seen now.)
- (2) An inscribed mask of king Siddha Pāl, the seventy-fourth king of Jagatsukh, dated Śaka 1500, or 1578 A.D.
- (3) An inscription of king Bahadur Singh, the seventy-fifth king of Kullu, on the wooden temple of Hiḍimbādevī at Dhungri-Manali, of 1553 A.D.
- (4) A copper-plate grant of the same king to Pandit Ramāpati of Chamba, of 1559 A.D.
- (5) Dhuval inscription at Syal, and a record in Kothi Kot Kandi of Prithvi Singh, seventy-eighth king, of 1608 and 1635 respectively.
- (6) Two inscriptions of the eightieth king, Jagat Singh of 1651 and 1656.
- (7) An inscription carved on the door-jambs of a temple at Manikarn, also of Jagat Singh.
- (8) An inscription on the door-jambs of the Śiva temple at Hat-Bajaura of 1673 of king Shyam Sen of Mandi (which suggests that this part was at least temporarily held by the Mandi dynasty).



- (9) Nārāyaṇa mask in Chanahan, Kothi Kayas, of 1688 A.D.
- (10) The Mahādeva mask inscription at Jvani, Kothi Raison, of 1712, of Man Singh, the eighty-second king.
- (11) The Kapilamuni inscription of Basauna, Kothi Kot Kandi, also of king Man Singh. (We were prevented from photographing this silver *mohra*.)
- (12) The Nārāyaṇa mask inscription Chanahan, in Kothi Kayas, of Jai Singh, eighty-fourth, of 1731 A.D.
- (13) An inscription on the Ādi Brahmā mask at Khokhan of about 1746 A.D. at the time of king Tedhi or Tech, that is Tej Singh; the eighty-fifth king.
- (14) A copper-plate inscription of Pritam Singh, eighty-sixth, of 1780 A.D.
- (15) The Haradas mask inscription at Manikarn of the time of Bikram Singh, 1802-1807 A.D.

The geographical limits of the Kulūta state in the medieval period changed with varying fortunes of kings, but at its maximum it comprised seven *Waziris* or provinces; the division has persisted down to the present —

- (1) **Waziri Parol, or Kullu proper.** The Beas valley from Rohtang in the north down to the Phojal Nala, which falls into the Beas on its right or west bank below Katrain, in the south; the Malana valley on the left of the Beas; and the right side of the Parvati from the west of its junction with the Malana Nala up to its confluence with the Beas at Bhuntar-Bhuin.
- (2) **Waziri Lag Sari.** The tract between the Phojal Nala near Katrain in the north and the Sarvari Nala near Kullu-Sultanpur in the south, on the right bank of the Beas.
- (3) **Waziri Lag Maharaja.** The south or right bank of the Sarvari Nala up to its junction with the Beas at Kullu, and the tract on the right bank of the Beas up to Bajaura in the south.
- (4) **Waziri Rupi.** Between the Parvati and Sainj rivers, and bounded by the Kanawar tract in the east and by the Beas in the west.
- (5) **Waziri Saraj.** The southern part of the state (between the Sainj in the north and the Sutlej in the south), subdivided by the Jalauri Range into Outer and Inner Saraj.

- (6) **Waziri Bangahal.** A part of Chhota Bangahal, bounded in the west by Kangra and in the south-west by Mandi.
- (7) **Waziri Lahaul.** South-eastern part of Lahaul.

In the following account, we shall deal with only those kings whose lives and careers left some impress upon either the history or culture of the state. Few dates can be given; sometimes neighbouring states enter the picture, and where the dates of their kings are known, then Kullu's history becomes a little less shadowy. In the case of kings whose masks are known, or were seen by us, the facts will be recorded.

Bihangamani Pāl, the founder of the dynasty, whom the *Bansāvali* credits with a legendary career, arrived in Jagatsukh from Prayāga, Almora or Māyāpurī. He and eleven of his successors ruled from Jagatsukh near Manali, but the exact date of the founder is not known. The eleventh king, Viśuddha Pāl, transferred the capital to Naggar, some ten km south. In the time of Rudra Pāl, the eighteenth king, Chamba is said to have conquered Lahaul from Kullu. Even in that early period, the tract around the Hamta Pass was in the possession of the Spiti Thakurs. The Piti Thakurs, as they are known to the compiler of the *Bansāvali*, made many incursions into the Kullu valley: their names ended in Sena. One immediately thinks of the Sena family of Nirmand of the sixth-seventh century with names such as Varuṇasena, Sañjaya-sena, Raviṣeṇa and Samudrasena. Chet Sen, chief of Spiti, invaded Kullu and made it tributary. But Prasiddha Pāl, son of Hamir Pāl and son's son of Rudra Pāl, liberated Kullu from Spiti's control, and also recovered Lahaul from Chamba.

In the reign of the twenty-fourth king Sansāra Pāl, Spiti was invaded by the forces of a country called the Gya-mur-Orr, and Chet Sen's dynasty was replaced by a Tibetan king; and Sansāra Pāl, who had helped the invaders, received three villages in recognition of his service.

Sansāra Pāl was succeeded by Bhog Pāl (twenty-fifth), but in a feud with his brother Vibhaya Pāl he was killed and the latter (twenty-sixth) usurped the throne but died without leaving a legitimate son. After the reign of Brahma Pāl, the kings of

Chamba, Ladakh, "Suket", Bushahr, Kangra and Bangahal agreed to make Gaṇeśa Pāl, an illegitimate son, probably of Vibhaya Pāl, his successor (twenty-eighth).

In the reign of Śrīdatteśvara Pāl, the thirty-first king, the third in succession from Gaṇeśa Pāl, king Amara of Chamba, that is Brahmapura, advanced through Lahaul and across the Rohtang and attacked Kullu. Kullu's king and his son Amara Pāl (thirty-second) and grandson were killed in the war, and another grandson took refuge with the king of Bushahr. There is much confusion again at this place. For the king of Chamba (which must stand for Brahmapura in the upper Ravi valley) is named Amara, and in Chamba's own genealogy no such king is known. However, if Amara is a corruption of Meruvarman, then the event took place around 700 A.D., but in that case the reference to Suket in the account of the Kullu king's predecessor removed by three generations must be a later interpolation, for Suket was not founded before 765 A.D. Kullu's *Bansāvali* also records that king Govardhana was ruling in Indraprastha (Delhi) at that time but no such king is known from independent sources.

For a length of time Kullu remained part of the Brahmapura-Chamba kingdom, the Pāl dynasty of Kullu having been without power for some five generations.

During the rule of Nārada Pāl, the fortieth king, there was another invasion from Chamba. But a dishonest truce was called by the Kullu people, and at night the Chamba soldiers were invited to a party at Kothi, south of the Rohtang. But the wooden bridgework spanning the extremely narrow and deep gorge at Rahla was replaced with grass, and when the unsuspecting Chamba warriors began to cross the bridge in the dark in single file they plunged into the water one by one, and it was only the sound of the drummers going down that alerted the men.

It is interesting to note that Bhū Pāl, the forty-third king, is probably mentioned as a contemporary of Vira Sena, the founder of Suket. If the forty-third king in fact ruled in the eighth century, then, once again, this would speak for the great antiquity of Kullu's Pāl dynasty. During his

reign, the Suket army overran Kullu, according to both the genealogies of Kullu and Suket.

In the time of Bhū Pāl's grandson Hasta Pāl (forty-fifth king), Kullu was released from tribute on condition that the king would aid Suket in times of wars with other enemies. The circumstances were as follows: Vira Sena's grandson Vikrama Sena left on a pilgrimage asking his brother Trivikrama Sena to hold charge of the kingdom, but the younger brother usurped the throne. He enlisted the help of Hasta Pāl by first releasing him. However, when Vikrama Sena returned, he killed both, and regained his kingdom, and again made Kullu subordinate.

In the reign of the forty-seventh king Santoṣa Pāl, Kullu was involved in wars with Ladakh and the unidentified country Gya-mur-Orr. His son Tegh or Teja Pāl (forty-eighth king) killed the king of Baltistan named Muhammad Khan. The forty-ninth king Ucita Pāl probably invaded Tibet, but after his death the armies of Ladakh, Baltistan and "Gya-mur-Orr" combined to attack Kullu. The new king of Kullu, by a treaty agreed to pay tribute in *dzos* which remained in force till the early years of the seventeenth century. The Ladakh chronicles mention probably the same invasion when Lha-Chen-Utpala was ruling between 1125 and 1150 A.D. It is significant that the *dzos*, which do not breed in Kullu, are mentioned; therefore, we may assume that part of Lahaul up to the confluence of the Chandra and Bhaga at Tandi was in possession of Kullu, and beyond that it was Chamba's territory.

It is recorded about the reign of the fiftieth king Sikandar Pāl that he visited Delhi and obtained the help of the king to conquer "Gya-mur-Orr", Baltistan and Tibet. These countries then became vassals of Delhi and paid their tribute through the Kullu king as Delhi's representative. A king of Kashmir named Ali Sher Khan is mentioned as a contemporary of Nirṛti Pāl, the fifty-fourth Kullu ruler. If the reference is genuine, then Ali Sher, whose period is 1351-1363, may be meant here. But if this is so, then Nārada Pāl, the forty-third Kullu king, could not have been a contemporary of Vira Sena in 765 A.D.

During the following years, the king of Bushahr

invaded Kullu from the south, but Gambhīra Pāl, the fifty-eighth king, drove him back, and marked the Sutlej as the boundary between the two states. During the reign of the sixtieth king Narendra Pāl, Kullu became subject to Bangahal for some ten years. The sixty-second and sixty-third kings, Nanda Pāl and Dharitrī Pāl, became vassals Kangra, but Indra Pāl, who followed, regained his independence.

In the reign of the seventy-second king Udhran Pāl, independent evidence for the first time becomes available. An inscription on the Hiḍimbādevī mask dated 94 in the Saptarṣi era has been taken to mean 1418 A.D. Two stone slabs in the Sandhyādevī temple at Jagatsukh bore the date 4 in the Saptarṣi era, that is 1428 A.D. (However, the slabs could not be located when we visited Jagatsukh.)

The period of fifty years from 1450 to 1500 saw many upheavals in Kullu's fortunes. Suket, which in the reign of the sixty-seventh king Kerala Pāl had captured much territory, had retained its possessions. Sultan Zainul Abedin of Kashmir (1420-1470) invaded Kullu and damaged its glory.

This interregnum separates the king Kailāsa Pāl from Siddha Pāl or Siddha Singh, the seventy-fourth king, who was the first ruler of Kullu to assume the title of Singh. It is doubtful, however, if he belonged to a different family, at least the *Bansāvali* nowhere suggests it. Hitchson and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, p. 443, write that so far as they are aware, "there is not a single instance in the history of the Punjab Hill States of a change of dynasty and it seems improbable that such a change took place in Kullu." Yet we must remember that Rajput families migrated to the Himalayas at about the same time, that is the fifteenth-sixteenth century, and Siddha Pāl Singh may be related to one of them.

Siddha Singh, or Siddha Pāl Singh, had to wage many battles before he could establish himself. All the Ranas and Thakurs, one of whom held extensive lands between Jagatsukh and Mandi on both banks of the Beas, had to be tamed. The Baragarh fort north of Halan on the right bank of the Beas had remained in the possession of Suket, and it was obtained by Siddha Pāl Singh by a stratagem. The Tibetans had since long founded settlements on

strategic roads and near the important passes such as the Hamta and Chanderkhani passes leading respectively to the Chandra valley and Kothi Kanawar, at the head of the Parvati valley. Siddha Singh finally got rid of the Piti Thakurs, as the Tibetan chiefs were known. From his period has come down to us a mask of Viṣṇu in Sajla village.

In the sixteenth century, when Siddha Pāl Singh was ruling, the Mughal dynasty was founded in India, with Babar, who ruled from 1526 to 1530, and Humayun, who ruled from 1530 to 1556, being Siddha Pāl Singh's contemporaries.

While Siddha Singh had won over much territory for his newly established kingdom, it was his son Bahadur Singh (seventy-fifth) who acquired Waziri Rupī which had remained in the possession of Suket, by winning over the Thakurs by tact or by force as necessary. Bahadur Singh built a palace at Makarsa in Kothi Sainsar and resided there. There is some controversy about the identification of Makarsa. However, it is likely that Makarsa is the same as the modern Garsa situated on the Hurla Nala on the left bank of the Beas (below Bhuntar). Kothi Sainsar, Halan, Banga, Sarchi and Chhani in Waziri Saraj were also vanquished by Bahadur Singh.

The three Waziris of Parol, Rupī and the inner part of Waziri Saraj were now in the control of Bahadur Singh. But Suket's influence still remained on the right bank of the Beas, in the Waziris of Lag Sari and Lag Maharaja, or the tract from the Phojal Nala to Sarvari Nala and from the Sarvari Nala to Bajaura. Saraj-Mandi, the remaining part of Inner Saraj, part of Outer Saraj, and Chhota Bangahal also were outside the pale of Kullu. The *Bansāvalis* of both Kullu and Mandi record that Bahadur Singh and Sahib Singh of Mandi (1554-75) together conquered the rest of Kullu, the entire Saraj went to Kullu and Mandi acquired that tract known as Saraj Mandi. Similarly, Lag Waziri was obtained, and thus gradually Bahadur Singh came into possession of Kullu as the state had existed some centuries earlier. Bahadur Singh ruled from 1532 to 1569, and has bequeathed to us an inscription carved on the Dhungri-Manali temples.

The period of Bahadur Singh's rule (1532 to 1569 A.D.) coincided with the rule of Humayun (1530 to



1556) and Akbar (1556 to 1605), and witnessed the gradual expansion of Mughal influence in the hills. Bahadur Singh's successors came under the subjugation of the Mughals and had to pay tribute, though in their internal affairs all the hill chiefs carried on their affairs without much imperial intervention.

Jagat Singh (1637-72) the eightieth king, was by far the greatest king of the Singh dynasty. He introduced Rāma worship in his kingdom. According to a legend, a Brahmin sacrificed his life on account of the king's avarice, and to expiate the sin Jagat Singh had an image of Rāma installed, and dedicated his kingdom. Jagat Singh conquered the Rajas of Lag on the right of Beas, with the help of Mandi. As a result, the Chawhar tract which consists of the slopes of the outer Himalayas leading towards the Uhl river and originally part of Bangahal, came into the possession of Kullu-Mandi. Chawhar remained with Mandi, and the rest went to Kullu. Jagat Singh's inscription exists at Manikarn; some *mohras* can still be seen at Kullu's *Dussehra* inscribed with Tākri records of the time of Jagat Singh.

Mughal influence had certainly penetrated to Kullu by then, for Dara Sikoh issued a *firman* to Jagat Singh in 1657 to release at once the relatives of Jog Chand, king of Lag, whom Jagat Singh was holding in captivity after Jog Chand's death. He also forcibly recovered Outer Saraj from Suket and Bushahr.

In the reign of Jagat Singh's son Bidhi Singh, the eighty-first king, the Sutlej river became the southern boundary of the state. In the north he recovered upper Lahaul from Ladakh to which it had been tributary from circa 1125 A.D.

Man Singh (1688-1719), the eighty-second, fought a war with Mandi and captured all the areas up to the Drang Salt mines, a very vital economic victory, but the Mandi annals give a conflicting report. During this period, there were repeated wars between Kullu and Mandi. Man Singh managed to add Bara Bangahal and Chhota Bangahal along the southern slopes of the Dhaula Dhar Range to his dominion; he also fixed his boundary with Ladakh in Lahaul, probably at Lingti Plain, and exacted tribute from Spiti. A silver *mohra* of

the sage Kapila at Basauna, on the left bank of the Beas near Bhuntar, bears a record of the time of Man Singh.

Jay Singh, the eighty-fourth king, faced with a revolt, fled to Lahore to seek help of the Mughal governor; but the governor's daughter fell in love with the handsome youth, and to prevent her advances Jay Singh ran away, leaving the affairs of the state in the hands of his brother Tēdhi or Tej Singh (eighty-fifth). Tēdhi Singh ruled from 1747 to 1767, and has left us a silver mask in the Ādi Brahmā temple at Khokhan near Kullu.

Ghamand Chand, the ambitious Katoch ruler of Kangra came into conflict with Tēdhi Singh, first as king and then as governor of Ahmed Shah Abdali, who had become master of the Punjab in 1752. For the next few years not only Tēdhi Singh but most of the hill chiefs had to cross swords with Ghamand Chand, his son Tēgh Chand and the latter's son Sansār Chand, all of whom were trying to expand their influence in all directions with the help of a well-trained army. At about the same time the Gurkhas of Nepal were advancing into western Himalayas from the east, and soon the Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh was to make his appearance in Lahore. The Hill kings invited Amar Singh Thapa, the Gurkha general, to whom Sansar Chand offered battle but lost. Sansār Chand shut himself up in the strong Kangra fort for four years, and then in despair he appealed to Ranjit Singh. The Sikh chief was only too eager to enter the hill politics; he drove out the Gurkhas, but effected a vice-like hold on most of the hill states and drained their treasuries to enrich himself. Kullu also experienced Ranjit Singh's exactions to the same extent as did the other states. This situation continued during the reigns of Bikram Singh and Ajit Singh, and in 1846 after the First Sikh War the territory between the Sutlej and Ravi was ceded to the British by the Sikhs, to be administered, along with Lahaul and Spiti, as a Tehsil of the Kangra district.

## HISTORY OF CHAMBA

Bharmaur, ancient Brahmapura, and later Chamba, in the extreme north-west of Himachal Pradesh, have preserved a well-documented history from circa 500 A.D. The primary sources for these are inscriptions and literature. For the earliest period

we have the inscriptions on four brass images — those of Śaktidevī at Chhatradi, and of Durgā Mahiṣamardīnī known as Lakṣaṇā, Nandi and Gaṇeśa, at Bharmaur — all of king Meruvarman of the early eighth century. Chamba is rich in inscribed stone and copper-plate records of later periods too, which were edited by J. Ph. Vogel (*Antiquities of Chamba I*) and B. Ch. Chhabra (*Antiquities of Chamba II*). The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, the chronicle of Kashmir compiled by Kalhaṇa in 1148 A.D. is also helpful. A similar official genealogy, or *Bansāvali*, was compiled for the kingdom of Chamba in the seventeenth century A.D., but the sequence of rulers that we can build up with the help of inscriptions does not always tally with the order preserved in the *Bansāvali*.

A legendary hero called Maru, who belonged to the solar dynasty, migrated to the north-west from Ayodhyā, and founded the kingdom of Brahmapura in the valley of the Budhil river, a tributary of the Ravi, seventy-five kilometres to the east of Chamba. His successors ruled over the country from that capital city for over three hundred years, until Sāhilavarman, in circa 900 A.D., shifted his headquarters to the more centrally placed Ravi valley where he founded Campā, modern Chamba.

Meruvarman's inscriptions derive his lineage from Moṣuṇa, and record the names of his three

Fig. 20. Detail of wooden door-frame, Hirma temple, Manali. Dated 1553 A.D. in the time of king Bahadur Singh of Kullu. (Courtesy Archaeological Survey of India, hereafter, ASI.)

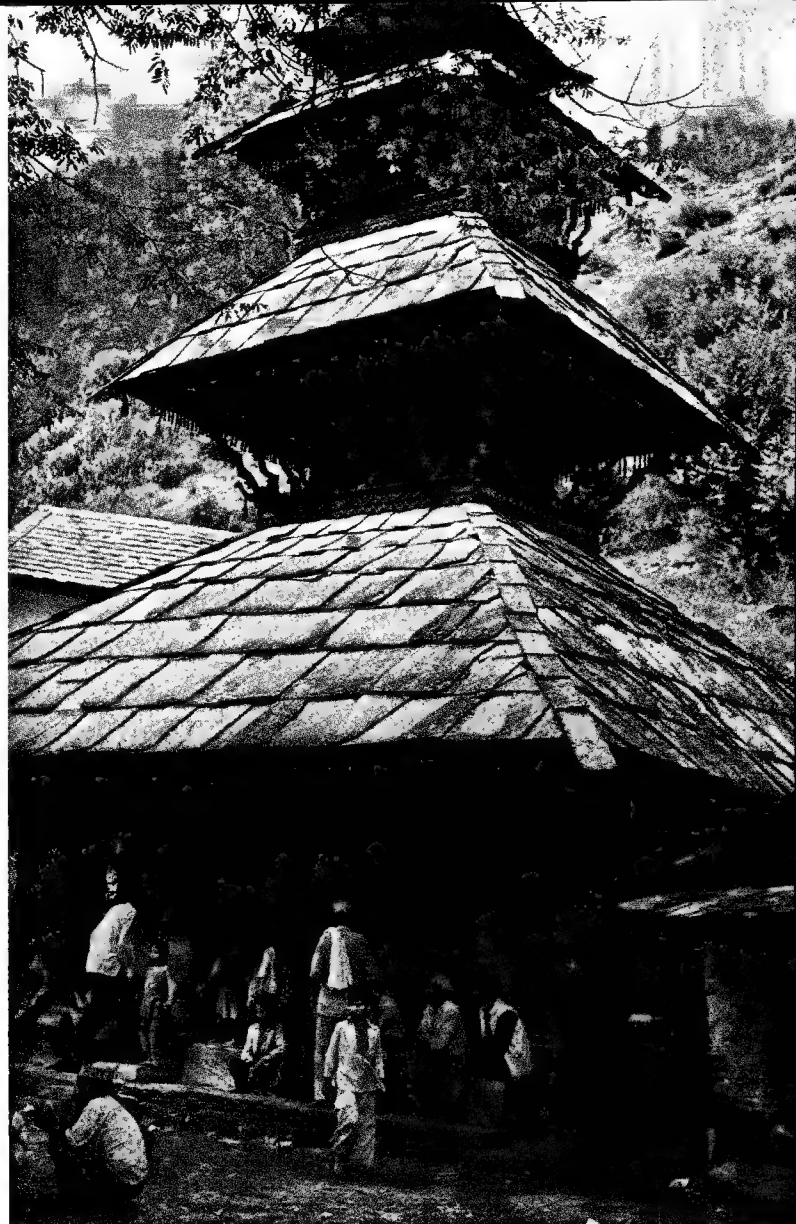
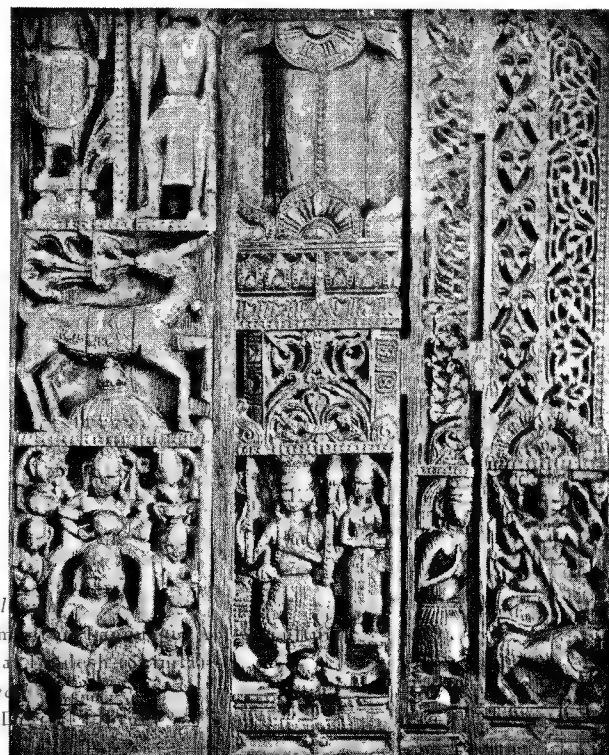


Fig. 21. The Ādi Brahṃā temple, Khokhan, Kullu. 1746 A.D.

A dozen stone sculptures of the tenth-eleventh century preserved in a shed next to the shrine suggest that a much larger stone temple must have stood here. The present structure is of the time of the king Ṭeḍhī Singh of Kullu, as shown by a dated silver mask of 1746 A.D. in the sanctum (Figs. 372-373). Note the quaintly twisted brackets of the upper chambers.

immediate predecessors Divākaravarman, Balavarman and Ādityavarman; if any other kings intervened between Moṣuṇavarman and Ādityavarman, their names are not recorded. On the other hand, the *Bansāvali* traces the descent of the family from Maruvarman, omits the names of Divākara-varman, Balavarman and Ādityavarman, mentioning Meruvarman as the eleventh king, though it too credits him with building the Bharmaur temples, and gives the name of Moṣuṇa, though only as the fourteenth king in direct descent from Maru.

Goetz hypothesized (*Early Wooden Temples of Chamba*, pp. 18 ff.) that Ājyavarman and Devavarman of the List are in fact Ādityavarman and Divākaravarman; it is a fact that the Chhatradi record also gives the grandfather's name as Devavarman, yet we must consider the above as only a hypothesis, as several other kings are interpolated in the genealogy, and the names given in the two sources, the epigraphs and the *Bansāvali*, are not the same.

Goetz has built up an elaborate picture of the early centuries of the Brahmapura kingdom. However, his history is extremely conjectural, and we must conclude that although the genealogy does provide us with ten predecessors of Meruvarman it excludes those which are clearly named in his inscriptions and whose lineage mentioned, and whose historicity is thus beyond doubt; Moṣuṇavarman, who was the founder of the dynasty according to Meruvarman's same inscriptions, is in the genealogy only the third *successor* to Meruvarman; and Yūgākaravarman of the genealogy is the first king of the post-Meruvarman period whose existence is independently known from epigraphic sources.

#### **Ādityavarman** (circa 625 A.D.)

He was the great-grandfather of Meruvarman, whose own date is circa 700 A.D. Therefore, he may have flourished around 625 A.D. He is the earliest king who assumed the title *varman*. As Goetz suggested, the *Bansāvali* probably may have preserved his name in an altered form, for a king Ādivarman figures as the fifth king of the Brahmapura dynasty founded by Maru. (He may have been a contemporary of Samudrasena of the Nirmand copper-plate.)

#### **Balavarman** (circa 650 A.D.)

Two of Meruvarman's inscriptions mention Balavarman, grandfather of Meruvarman, but the *Bansāvali* is silent. Both he and Ādityavarman may have acknowledged the suzerainty of Harṣavardhana of Sthānviśvara.

#### **Divākaravarman** (circa 675 A.D.)

The Bharmaur inscriptions have this form of the name; but the *Bansāvali* gives Devavarman, which Goetz took to be only a variant. But in that text Devavarman's father's name is given as Ādivarman

and not Balavarman, and again he is removed from Meruvarman by as many as four generations.

#### **Meruvarman** (circa 700 A.D.)

The Chhatradi epigraph commemorates his victory over his rivals with the assistance of Devī; there must be some substance in his claims, for a stone record of a *sāmanta* or feudatory of his, named Aṣāḍha, exists near Gum, a village on the right bank of the Ravi, between Chamba and Chhatradi.

The Kullu *Bansāvali* mentions that the thirty-first king Śrīdatteśvara Pāl of Kullu was slain by king Amara of Chamba-Brahmapura. Goetz argued in favour of the identification of the Chamba ruler with Meru. But one must be very cautious, especially, as this would also commit one to believe that the Kullu dynasty was really of great antiquity, whose thirty-first king ruled as early as 700 A.D.

Meruvarman built the Lakṣaṇā and the Śakti temples, and dedicated the Devī, Nandi and Gaṇeśa images at Bharmaur, and the Śakti image at Chhatradi.

#### **Lakṣmīvarman** (circa early ninth century)

During the reign of Lakṣmīvarman, an epidemic occurred which weakened the state, and this was followed by a Kīra invasion. The Kīras have been identified with the nomadic tribes of the hinterland of Kashmir and with those Tibetans who were not the immediate neighbours of the Indians of the Himalayas. According to the *Bansāvali*, when Lakṣmīvarman died, his queen was pregnant, and gave birth to a son during her exile. Living *incognito*, she was identified by an astrologer from the footprints of the boy who had royal signs. The queen was conducted to Suket where in due course her son married the king's daughter, received Pangna now in Mandi district as dowry, and recovered his kingdom with Suket's help.

#### **Sāhilavarman** (first half of the tenth century)

Sāhilavarman, in the early tenth century, shifted his capital from Brahmapura to Campā, sometimes spelt as Caṇpā in the copper-plates; according to the copper-plates of his descendants Somavarman and Aṣaṭavarman, Sāhila allied himself with the kings of Trigarta and Kulūta, and repulsed an attack of the Saumatikas of Vallāpura or Balor. Sāhilavarman is credited with building the temples

of Campāvatī, Candragupteśvara and Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa at Chamba; in their present state, however, all the temples of Chamba are later by several centuries.

Many legends have grown around the personality of Sāhilavarman. According to one, water was scarce in the new capital of Campā; the priests advised the king to sacrifice his young daughter Campāvatī, but his queen Nayanādevī gave up her own life to save her daughter; she is worshipped as a Devī even today under the name of Suhīdevī, a small image commemorating her memory at Chamba.

#### **Yugākaravarman** (circa 940 A.D.)

In the *Bansāvali* the bare fact of Yugākaravarman's ascension to the throne has been recorded, but Yugākaravarman has the distinction of being the first ruler of the dynasty ruling with its capital at Chamba whose copper-plate is in existence. It records a land grant to the Narasimha temple at Bharmaur, and that the king built the Gaurīśvara temple at Chamba.

#### **Vidagdhavarman** (circa 960 A.D.)

A copper-plate issued by him mentions his father and mother Yugākara and Bhogamatī, and his *gotra* as Mūṣūṇa.

#### **Dagdhavarman** (circa 980 A.D.)

The *Bansāvali*'s sequence of Yugākaravarman, Vidagdhavarman and Dagdhavarman is confirmed by a stone inscription, which records the first two names and Dodakavarman, obviously the same as Dagdhavarman.

#### **Sālavāhanavarman** (circa 1040 A.D.)

The *Bansāvali* has not preserved his name, but we have as many as three copper-plates of this king, besides, his name is mentioned also in the plates of his sons Somavarman and Āsaṭa.

According to the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, the Kashmiri king Ananta (1028-1060) subjugated Sāla, king of Campā, presumably our Sālavāhana, and placed another king on his throne, who has been identified with his son Somavarman (see H. C. Ray, *Dynastic History of North India* I, p. 141). Now, it is a historically known fact that since early times, Kāśmīra had tried to bring Campā (as well as other

states up to the Ravi) under its control, but for a long period the claim could not be effectively exercised, as Campā had become a strong kingdom, especially in the time of Sāhilavarman. With the defeat (and probably the death) of Sālavāhana, Chamba's independence ended.

#### **Somavarman and Āsaṭa** (1060-80 and 1080-1105)

After unseating Sālavāhana, Ananta conferred the Chamba kingdom upon his sons Somavarman and Āsaṭa, who ruled successively. One copper-plate of Somavarman alone, and one signed by both the brothers, are known.

The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* has recorded that Āsaṭa, along with seven other mountain kings, was present in the court of Kalaśa, the son of Ananta of Kāśmīra — evidently acknowledging the overlordship of Kashmir earlier asserted by Ananta himself.

#### **Jāsaṭavarman** (first quarter of the twelfth century)

The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* describes this king as having taken part in a rebellion in Kashmir, probably when he was still the heir-apparent. A fountain stone in the Pangī valley dates itself in the first regnal year of Jāsaṭa and in Śāstra 81, or 1105 A.D. This shows that Pangī was as early as 1105 a dependency of Chamba. Another fountain stone in Churah is dated 1114 A.D. and shows that even Churah was a vassal state. Jāsaṭa ruled till about 1120 A.D.

#### **Udayavarman** (1120-1140)

In his time Kashmir had weakened due to Muslim invasions and internal feuds. Ananta had been succeeded by his son Harṣa, who was killed in 1101, along with his son Bhoja. Bhikṣācandra, the latter's son, had to live in exile in far away Mālava. Chamba asserted its independence, taking advantage of the weak government in Kashmir.

#### **Lalitavarman** (1143 to circa 1175)

A fountain inscription at Devirikothi in Churah of Rājānaka Nāgapāla records the seventeenth regnal year of Lalitavarman, and another at Salhi in Pangī records the twenty-seventh year and Śāstra 46 or 1170 A.D. Therefore, Lalitavarman started his rule in 1143. Lalitavarman must have been the lord of Churah, but presumably this province was won over by a Vallāpura king Raṇa Pāl, or Aruṇa

Pāl, for his name too is recorded on a slab at Devirikothi.

We shall pass over the reigns of some kings who either did not contribute to the history of the state, or who at least are not known from either the genealogy and chronicle, or any significant inscriptions.

In the sixteenth century the Mughal rule was established in India. But for four hundred years prior to that, the Muslims had repeatedly invaded Kashmir and the Indian plains; Chamba, however, buttressed as it was by the Himalayas, had not been affected. But once the Mughals had established themselves in the plains of North India, they turned their eyes towards the Ravi valley. Besides, Kangra and Nurpur had already started figuring in the disputes between them and the Suris. We may suppose, therefore, that the hill kingdom of Chamba could not have remained unaffected for long.

#### **Gaṇeśavarman (1512-1559)**

He was a contemporary of Humayun. One of his copper-plates gives the name of his son as Pratap Singh Varma, and after him Singh became a regular cognomen of the family. It is interesting to note that in Kullu also, this was precisely the period when the traditional dynastic suffix was given up for the new Rajput suffix Singh.

#### **Pratap Singh Varman (1559-1586)**

Pratap Singh Varman was a contemporary of Akbar, and Mughal imperial influence definitely stretched into this remote hill principality. For Akbar's able finance minister Todar Mal was deputed to the hills to claim allegiance, and Chamba had to part with Rihlu between Nurpur and Dharamsala, and all the tract to its east. However, in all its internal matters Akbar allowed Chamba complete autonomy.

#### **Balabhadravarman (ruled from 1589-1613 A.D.)**

An extremely generous king, he has bequeathed to us no fewer than forty-two plates. Worried over the drain on the economy, the ministers pleaded with the heir-apparent Janardan to assume kingship. Balabhadra was deposed in 1613, and he died in 1641.

#### **Janardan (1613-23)**

Around this time Nurpur state was rising into prominence, and its king Jagat Singh had the ambition to annex Chamba. He was in favour with Jehangir, and was made governor of Bengal. But around 1618 when Jagat Singh's brother Suraj Mal, who was then ruling in Nurpur, rebelled against the Mughal sovereignty, Jagat Singh was recalled from Bengal, and deputed to Kangra to lay siege on the Kangra fort. After the Mughals captured Kangra and left, hostilities between Nurpur and Chamba were resumed, and ultimately Janardan was killed. Probably Balabhadra was restored his kingdom after Janardan's death, for copper-plates issued in his name have been found.

#### **Prithvi Singh (1641-1664)**

When Janardan was killed, his queen was pregnant; the son when born had been conveyed to Mandi. Prithvi Singh, the prince, spent his childhood in Mandi. When Jagat Singh rebelled against Shah Jehan, Prithvi Singh found an opportunity to regain his ancestral throne; advancing across the Rohtang and along the Chandrabhaga, he entered Churah through the Cheni Pass, and recaptured both that province as well as Chamba itself. Prithvi Singh's relations with Shah Jehan always remained cordial, and the Chamba king visited Delhi as many as nine times during his reign. An inscription of his period, dated 1649, is engraved around the collar of Durgā's lion mount in the temple at Mehla.

#### **Chhatar Singh (Shatru Singh) (1664-1690)**

Chhatar Singh was a devout Hindu and had an independent temperament. When Chhatar Singh was on the throne, Aurangzeb in 1678 issued a *firman* to destroy all Hindu temples. Instead of carrying out the imperial order, Chhatar Singh defied it by ordering gilt pinnacles to be put on all the temples, which are to be seen even today.

At the beginning of his reign, Lahaul was finally divided between Kullu and Chamba. Formerly, all the land up to the confluence of the Chandra and Bhaga had been under Chamba authority, that to the east being under the influence of Kullu.

#### **Uday Singh (1690-1720)**

His rule witnessed the expansion of the Dogra influence east of Jammu. The first few years were



prosperous, but later on Uday Singh began to follow sensual pursuits, and was killed as part of a conspiracy. The village of Udaypur in Chamba Lahaul which is famous for its Markulādevī temple, is named after him.

Uday Singh died childless and was followed to the throne by his cousin Ugar Singh, the latter by his cousin Dalel Singh, after whom the succession reverted to Umed Singh, son of Ugar Singh.

#### Umed Singh (1748-1764)

His rule coincided with a critical point in Indian history. In the mid-eighteenth century, Mughal empire was tottering, the local Mughal deputies were defying central authority, and Ahmed Shah Durrani was consolidating his position in the north-west. All the hill chiefs took advantage of the weakened condition of the Mughal emperor of Delhi, and effectively reclaimed their former territories. Nominally, they were under Ahmed Shah Durrani, but for all practical purposes the hill chiefs east of the Jhelum were independent. This interlude lasted till 1767 when the Sikhs appeared on the horizon.

#### Raj Singh (1764-1794)

From around this time, Chamba and the other hill chiefs had to face the depredations from one, two or even more than two directions: for in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the Sikhs (organized into twelve *misl*s) were raising their standard. In Kangra, Ghamand Chand and later Sansār Chand were expanding their kingdom.

When Umed Singh died, his son Raj Singh was only about ten years old. Ghamand Chand, the ambitious chief of Kangra invaded Bara Bangahal and drove out Chamba troops from Pathiyar fort. Ranjit Dev, the Jammu king, who was related to Raj Singh's mother, then sent assistance and restored the lost territory. However, Ranjit Dev, on his side had designs to usurp Chamba. He had placed his representative named Aklu in the state to assist in the administration. Soon after Raj Singh's coming of age, his mother died and the king who was harbouring doubts about the real intentions of Aklu and Ranjit Dev, had the former put into prison. But an army was sent to punish Raj Singh, and the Chamba king was forced to seek aid from the Ramgarhia Sikhs around 1775. Raj Singh also

carried out wars with Basohli over the *pargana* of Bhalai, and with the kings of Bhadrawah and Kashtwar.

Meanwhile, Saifullah Khan, the Mughal governor of Kangra, did not give up the fort, although imperial Mughal power in Delhi had declined, and for as long as thirty years held out against Ghamand Chand and his grandson Sansār Chand. Ultimately, help was sought from the Sikhs, and the fort was surrendered to them by the garrison after the death of the governor. But some five years later, the fort came into Sansār Chand's possession and he then began to execute his design to bring other hill kingdoms within his sphere of influence. Raj Singh refused to accept Sansār Chand as his suzerain, and bravely offered battle, and died while fighting.

However, by the early years of the nineteenth century, the hill states were so oppressed by Sansār Chand's tyranny that they invited the Gurkhas of Nepal to attack Kangra; when the fort had been besieged for four years from 1805 to 1809, Sansār Chand appealed to Ranjit Singh, who liberated the Katoch chief, but retained the fort, and sovereignty over all the hill states passed to the Sikhs.

Raj Singh was followed to the throne by Jit Singh (1794-1808), Charhat Singh (1808-1844), and Śrī Singh (1844-1870) in linear succession. When the latter died, his elder brother Gopal Singh was made king and ruled from 1870 to 1873, then voluntarily abdicated in favour of his minor son Sham Singh (1873-1904).

## HISTORY OF MANDI

The name of Mandi may be derived from the Sanskrit *maṇḍapikā*, open hall, or market, and it may have had something to do with the fact that the town was situated on a vantage point on the trade route between the Punjab and Yarkand-Ladakh (Hutchinson-Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States* II, p. 373). Mandi is a place of importance for the Tibetans, for Guru Padmasambhava who was born in Rewalsar near Mandi visited Tibet during the reign of Srong Ide btzan in the second half of the eighth century.

Up until about 1500 Mandi and Suket, presently



Sundernagar, some 30 km south of Mandi and in the same district, formed a single kingdom. According to the tradition Vira Sena, a scion of an early Sena dynasty of Bengal, migrated to Suket where he founded a kingdom in 765 A.D. Among his descendants were two brothers, Sahu Sen and Bahu Sen. Bahu Sen set up a rival dynasty at Mangalaur in Kullu. King Karanchan Sen, tenth successor of Bahu Sen, tentatively dated to 1276 A.D., came into conflict with the kings of Kullu and was killed in battle. His queen was pregnant, and when a son was born to her, he was adopted by his mother's father. After ruling from Bhuin, about seven km north of Mandi on the Beas, as his capital, he died around 1350 A.D. Tradition credits he built the wooden temple of Parashar (Fig. 23). He defeated the ruler of Sakor and annexed his possessions.

#### **Kalyāṇa Sen (1300-1332)**

He built a palace at Bhatauli, now known as old Mandi, on the right bank of the Beas, which served as the capital till the present city was built in 1500 A.D. by Ajbar Sen. Then followed five or six kings who were either insignificant or have left no permanent records.

The Mandi dynasty came into prominence in 1500 with the assumption of the throne by Ajbar Sen (1500-34). He founded the town and built a palace. Ajbar Sen fought with the chiefs of the neighbourhood of Mandi.

After uneventful reigns of five kings, Suraj Sen came to the throne. He fought numerous wars with Kullu, Guler and Suket, built the fort of Kamlagarh and the Māndi palace known as the Damdama. His eighteen sons died before him, and Suraj Sen offered up his kingdom to Kṛṣṇa Mādhava Rai. He was succeeded by his brother Śyām Sen (1658-73), who built the Śyāmā Kālī temple on the Tarna Hill above Mandi town.

#### **Raja Siddha Sen (1678-1719)**

Raja Siddha Sen made Mandi a powerful kingdom by conquests. He built the Triloknath temple at Mandi, a large tank near the Damdama palace, and the Siddha-Gaṇeśa temple near Mandi. He hospitably received Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru.

During the career of the dynasty founded by Ajbar Sen in 1500 A.D., the Mandi rulers were subject to Mughal supremacy. In 1752, Ahmed Shah ceded the hill provinces to Ahmed Shah Durrani, though actual control remained in the hands of the kings themselves. Later, the Sikhs became powerful, and Mandi came under the Sikh influence.

Siddha Sen was followed by Shamsher Sen, who had a long reign, from about 1720 to 1780.

With the rise of the Durrani in the Punjab, the house of Ghamand Chand Katoch gained in importance as he was made Governor of the province. With the ascension of Sansār Chand, son of Ghamand Chand in 1775, house of Katoch became supreme, and Mandi too had to acknowledge its supremacy. In the time of Shamsher Sen's successor Surma Sen (1781-1788), the process of Mandi's subjugation to Kangra continued.

With the death of Surma Sen, Ishvari Sen, who was only five years old, ascended the throne. At this time Sansār Chand was ruling in Kangra. As Ishvari Sen was a minor, intrigues arose, and his loyal minister in despair invited Sansār Chand to intervene. Sansār Chand already had made designs on the other kingdoms of the hills, and took this opportunity by invading Mandi in 1792.

The last years of the eighteenth and the early years of the nineteenth century were of great significance for the hills. Katoch Sansār Chand had ascended the throne of Kangra in 1775 and was harbouring designs to possess all the hill kingdoms and the Punjab. In Lahore, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was harbouring similar designs. In Nepal, Gurkha power was ascending, and spreading to the west. By 1803 they had conquered the entire hill country up to the Sutlej. All the hill chiefs were smarting under the inroads of Sansār Chand. When he attacked Kahlur (present Bilaspur) in 1805, the chief Raja Mohan Singh appealed to the Gurkhas. Most of the hill states including Jammu, Jasrota, Basohli and Mankot pledged their support to Amar Singh Thapa, the Nepali general. In the war between the armies of the Gurkhas and Sansār Chand, the Kangra chief was defeated, and took refuge inside the Kangra fort. The fort was besieged for four years but without success. The



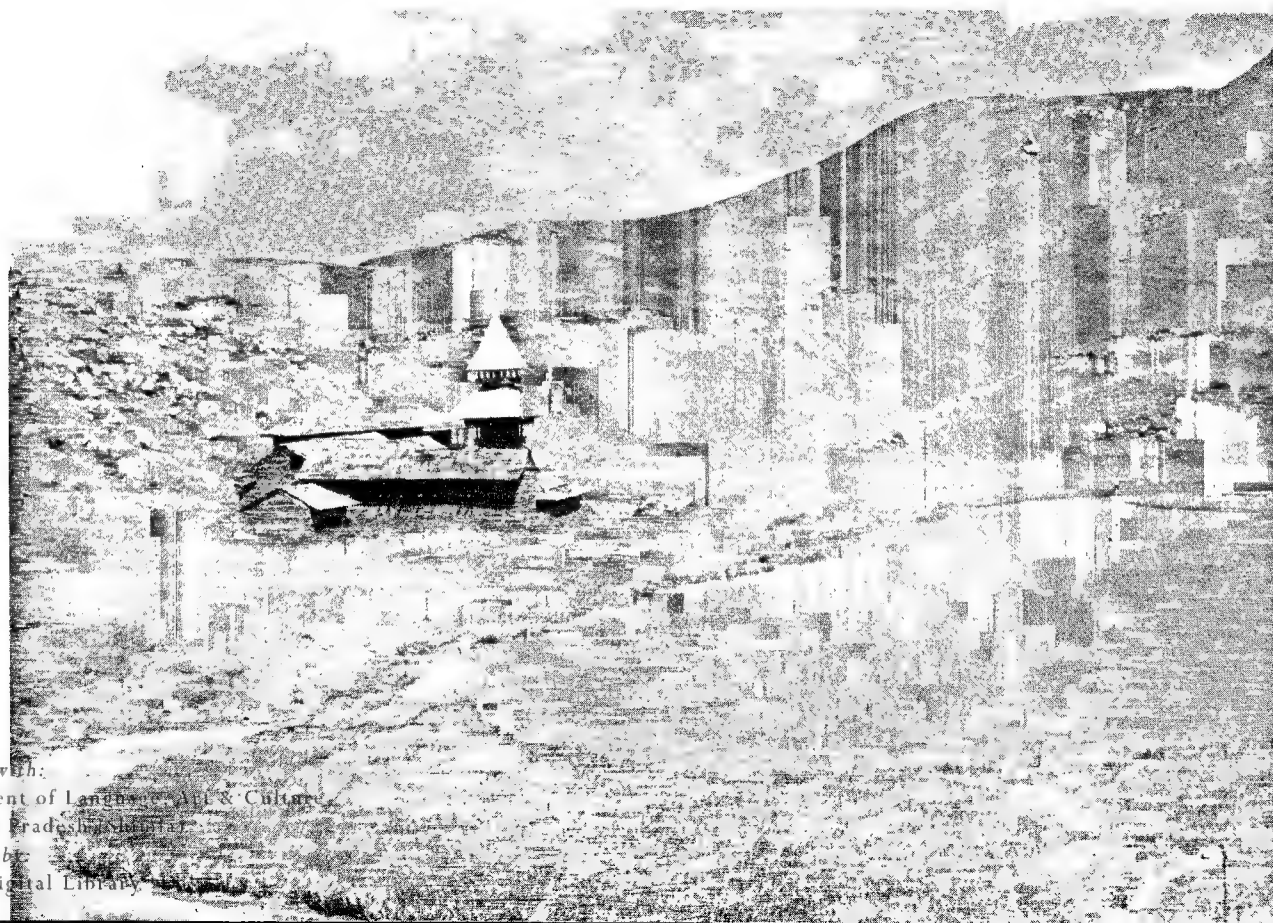
Fig. 22. Small shrine in the compound of the Triloknath temple, Mandi. Circa eleventh century.

Gurkhas liberated Ishvari Sen. They then laid waste the Katoch kingdom, and Sansār Chand was reduced to such straits that he had to appeal to Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh entered the Punjab hills and forced the Gurkhas to withdraw.

The hill states thus came under the direct supremacy of the house ruling in the Punjab plains, a relationship that endured till the Indian Independence in 1947. Ishvari Sen died in 1826. As his son Balbir Sen was a minor, Ishvari Sen's brother Zalim Sen occupied the throne. Zalim Sen was a cruel tyrant. On his death in 1839, Balbir Sen ascended the throne.

At the time when Ranjit Singh fought with the Gurkhas, the hill states of Suket, Kullu and Mandi had been defeated but they had not been annexed. It was now conceived that first Mandi was to be captured, then Ladakh. Accordingly, in 1840 Sikh army under Gen. Ventura marched towards Mandi. Balbir Sen approached the British power for protection, but the British did not involve

Fig. 23. Parāśara Ṛṣi's temple of wood. Parashar, Mandi district. About fourteenth century.



themselves. Balbir Sen was arrested and confined in Amritsar, but on the assumption of the Lahore throne by Sher Singh, who had a kindly nature, he was released. In 1845 Balbir Sen and the British superintendent of the hill states entered into negotiations. Ultimately, when the Britishers concluded the Lahore Treaty with the Sikhs in 1846, the power over the hill states passed to the Company.

Balbir Sen died in 1851 and his minor son Bijai Sen assumed kingship. He died in 1902 without leaving any direct heir. In 1903 his relative Bhavani Sen was recognised as king and he died in 1912.

Fig. 24. A group of barselās. Royal memorial pillars, of Mandi.

About one hundred and fifty of these memorials stand inside a walled enclosure, fifteen metres square, outside the old city. They commemorate the kings and other members of royalty, their queens and concubines. Those at the rear are the earliest, of the thirteenth-fourteenth century, while the latest barsela is of king Bhavani Sen, who died in 1912 A.D.



Fig. 25. One of the earlier barselas of Mandi. In the upper panel, the king worships a linga, Siva being the patron of the dynasty; lower panels depict females of the household, according to their status. Some stones are inscribed.

## TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE OF HIMACHAL

Fig. 26. The temple of Śiva Vaidyanātha. Baijnath, Kangra. 1204 A.D. The original temple may be of early date, but it was renovated by two brothers in 1204 A.D.



## CLASSICAL STONE TEMPLES

## The Gaurī-Śaṅkara Temple, Jagatsukh, Kullu

THE SMALL STONE SHRINE of Gaurī-Śaṅkara at Jagatsukh, a few kilometres south of Manali on the road to Naggar, in Kullu district, is the earliest surviving all-stone temple in the state. Originally it consisted only of the sanctum, the two pillars together with the corrugated roof and the *śukanāsa* being later additions. The shrine is *triratha* on plan, having a small niche complete with *udgama* pediments on three of its walls which still enshrine Sūrya, Gaṇeśa and Durgā Mahiṣamardinī. A curvilinear *rekḥānāgara* superstructure crowns the sanctum. This simple and elegant shrine may be dated to the eighth century.

This small structure at Jagatsukh, the small and equally early Mahiṣāsūramardinī sculpture now preserved in the Simla Museum (Fig. 79) and the presence of some early carved fragments in the neighbouring stone and wood Sandhyā temple (Fig. 67) strongly suggest that the Sandhyā temple stands at the site of an earlier shrine.

## The Viśveśvara Temple, Bajaura, Kullu

The most famous stone temple not only in Kullu but in the whole of Himachal Pradesh is the Viśveśvara-Śiva temple at Bajaura (Fig. 18), about fifteen



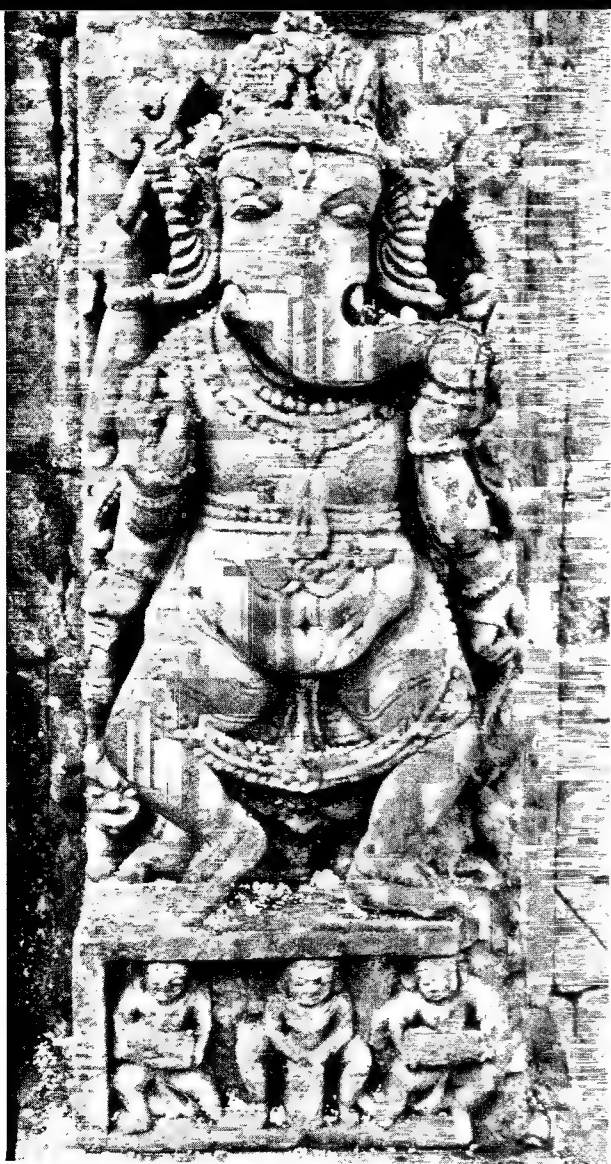


Fig. 27. *Gaṇeśa*. Vaidyanātha temple, Baijnath, Kangra. The renovation of 1204 was not the last one made on this temple, as this *Gaṇeśa* of the fourteenth-fifteenth century shows. In fact, some parts of the temple are still later.

kilometres south of Kullu. Although no inscription is associated with it, it is clear from its size, and style that it must be a royal foundation, probably built on the orders of some monarch of the Pratihāra dynasty which, as we have seen in the historical account of Himachal Pradesh, extended its sway over this territory.

The walls have prominent projections on all four sides, the eastern projection providing entrance to the sanctum, where a *liṅga* is installed, while the three others are treated as deep *deva-koṣṭha* niches enshrining *Gaṇeśa* (on the south, Fig. 29), *Viṣṇu* (west, Fig. 31), and *Durgā* (north, Fig. 32). *Gaṅgā* (Fig. 30) and *Yamunā* flank the



Fig. 28. *Surasundarī* flanking the entrance of the Vaidyañatha temple, Baijnath, Kangra. Thirteenth-fourteenth century.

shrine doorway. *Pūrṇa-kalaśas*, stencilled diamonds, looped garlands and other motifs decorate the walls. Above these niches on all the four sides are heavy *śukanāsās* enshrining three-faced *Śiva*; a typical curvilinear superstructure crowns the building.

The form of the temple marks the spread of the northern Indian architectural style into Himachal Pradesh. As we saw in our historical account, dynasties ruling in the Ganga-Yamuna plains must have attempted to extend their power into the Himalayas, in order to control the important trade routes to Tibet and Central Asia. Architectural and sculptural styles must have been introduced,

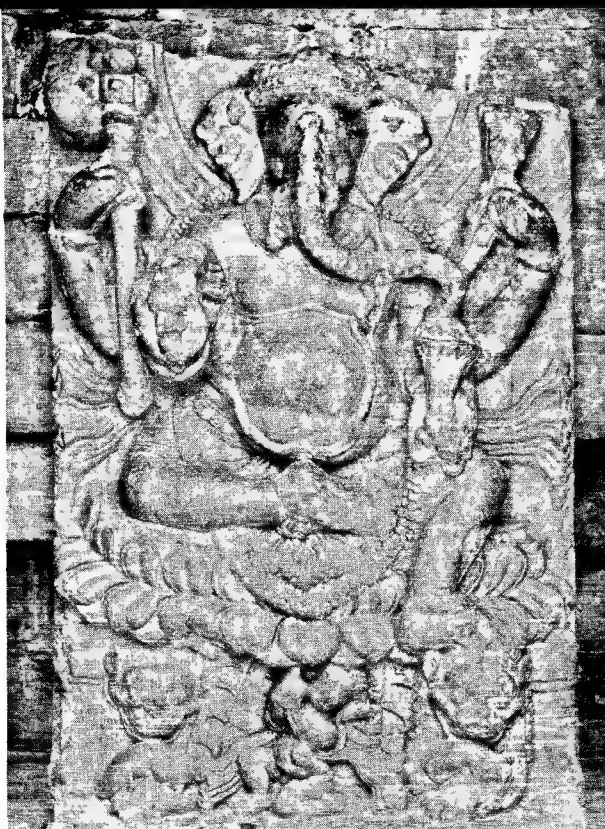


Fig. 29. Gaṇeśa. Southern niche of the Viśveśvara temple, Bajaura, Kullu. Ninth-tenth century. Sometimes a lion serves as Gaṇeśa's mount in the place of a mouse in Himachal art, and sometimes two lions are provided, as here. The bowl of sweets in Gaṇeśa's hand rests on a receptacle with a long tapered stem, another special feature of the iconography of Himachal (see also Fig. 80).

Fig. 31. Viṣṇu in the western niche. Viśveśvara temple, Bajaura, Kullu. Ninth-tenth century.

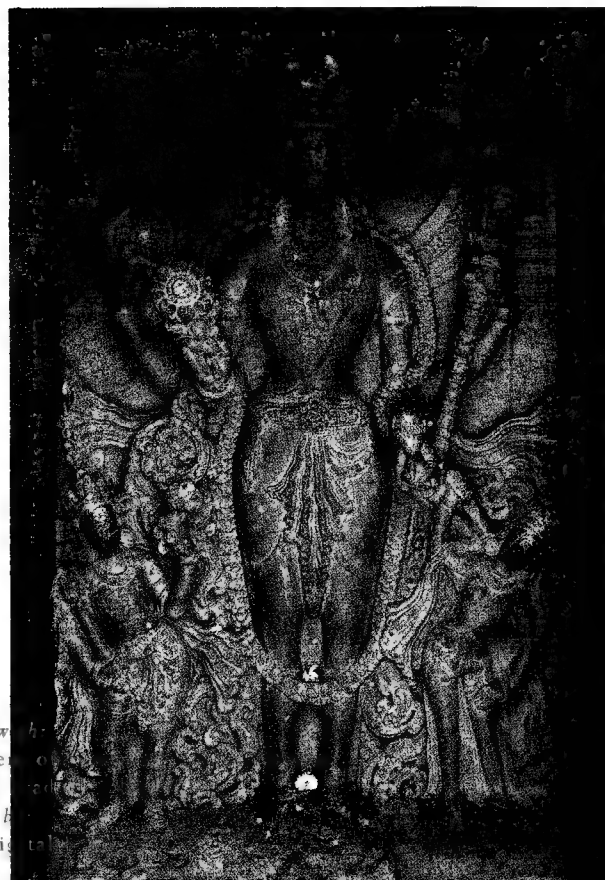
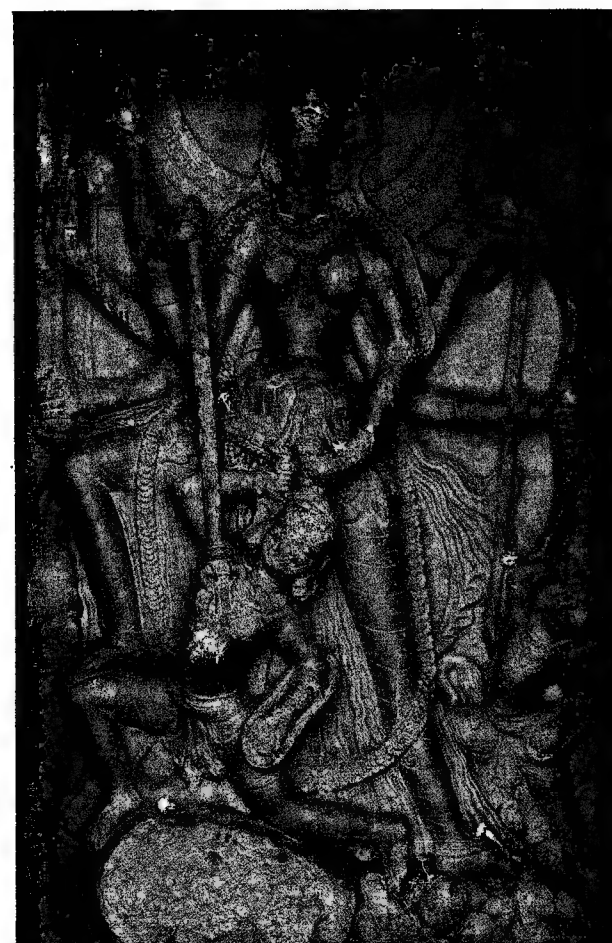


Fig. 30. River goddess Gaṅgā flanking the shrine door-way. Viśveśvara temple, Bajaura, Kullu. Ninth-tenth century.

Fig. 32. Durgā Mahiṣamardini. Northern niche, Viśveśvara temple, Bajaura, Kullu. Ninth-tenth century. The architecture of Kullu reflects the Pratīhāra style of northern Indian plains; however, in the eighth century, the Kārkota king Lalitāditya Mukṭāpīḍa of Kashmir extended his influence far to the east. The sculptures of the Bajaura temple show influences of the art of Kashmir-Chamba, in the deep-set navel and the flaming prabhā.





though the only known evidence is the wooden sculptures of Gajan and the stone sculptures from Nirmand, of the sixth-seventh century, discussed in the relevant Chapter.

The statuary of this northern Indian temple in the Himādrī style, as it may be called, shows a strong western influence from Kashmir-Chamba. Between the seventh century, when the wooden carvings of Gajan were made, which show no influence from the west, and the ninth century, when the Bajaura temple was erected, Kullu received a strong stylistic influence from Chamba, no doubt, from political and cultural contacts. In the first half of the eighth century, Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa, the Kārkoṭa king of Kashmir, spread his power far to the east, and Chamba and Kullu both must have felt its effects. The sculptures of the Bajaura temple which show Chamba-Kashmir traits, such as deep-set navels, prominent pectoral muscles, trefoil crowns and pointed ogival *prabhā* with flames issuing from them, enable us to date the building to the ninth century A.D.

## CLASSICAL WOODEN TEMPLES

Numerous shrines must have been built in wood since early times all over Himachal, as wood is plentiful everywhere; however, only a few have survived, namely the Lakṣanādevī temple in Bharmaur, the Śaktidevī temple in Chhatradi nearby, both in the Chamba district, and the Markulādevī temple in Udaipur in Lahaul-Spiti district, though all three were renovated at least once in subsequent periods.

Chamba is a part of Himachal Pradesh in the political sense, but in another sense, the province has since long had links with Kashmir to its west and north-west. Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa of the Kārkoṭa dynasty of Kashmir, presumably extended his sway into Chamba in the first half of the eighth century; later on, too, political influence of Kashmir often penetrated eastwards to Chamba, and beyond. The architecture of the wooden temples of Chamba, too, may be said to follow the Kāśmīra style of architecture with triangular pediments taking the place of the curvilinear superstructure of the temples of the plains of India.



Fig. 33. Lintel of a "false" niche, rock-cut temple, Masrur, Kangra. About the ninth century. In the eighth century, Yaśovarman of Kanauj probably ruled over this area as the eastern neighbour of Lalitāditya of Kashmir. Eventually, Kashmir's political and sculptural influence swamped over the Punjab Himalayas. Masrur as yet shows no trace of that art. (Courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies, hereafter AIIS.)

Fig. 34. One face of a two-sided sculpture. Sculpture shed of the rock-cut temple, Masrur, Kangra. Circa ninth century.



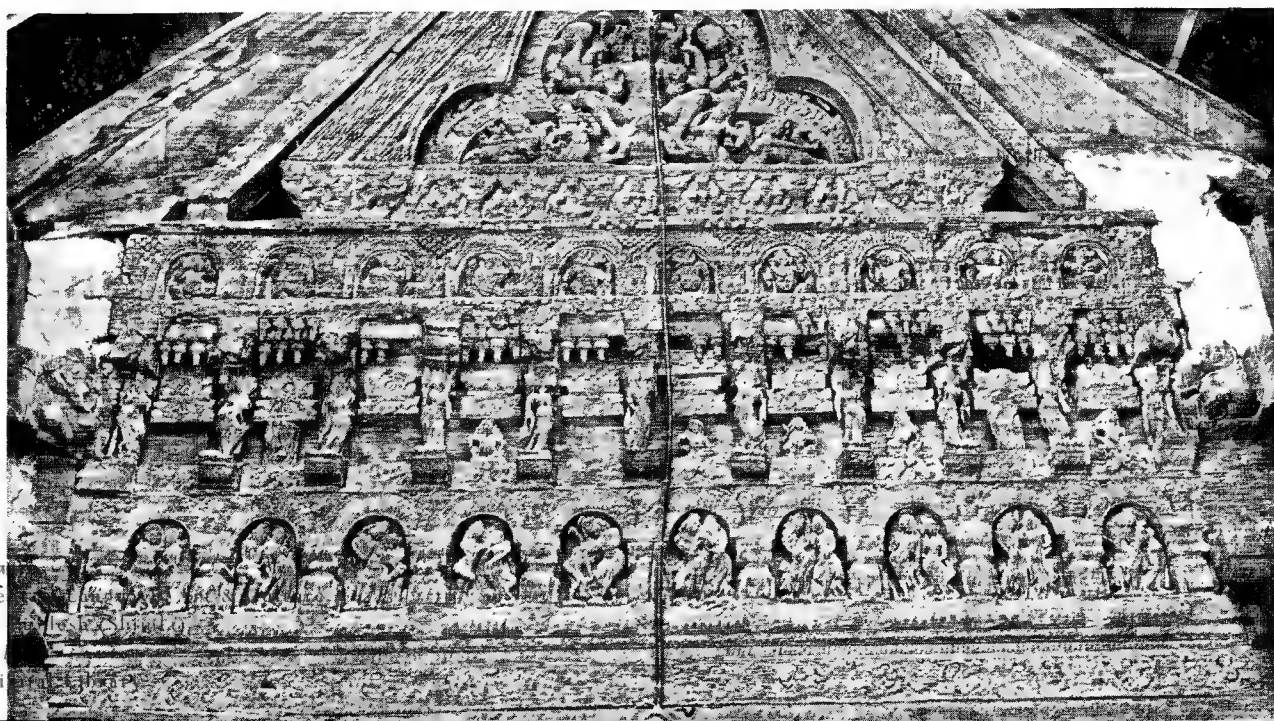


Fig. 36. Miniature shrine, Sajla, Kullu. Circa eleventh century.



Fig. 35. Miniature shrine, Nirmand, Kullu. About the eleventh century. Half a dozen such shrines with different types of superstructures are at Nirmand and others are in other villages. Their plan is simple, having a square cell (now mostly empty) fronted by two pillars.

Fig. 37. Wooden superstructure of the front of the Lakṣaṇā-devī temple, Bharmaur, Chamba. Circa ninth century. Amorous couples standing in arched niches, and celestial maidens, are surmounted by a trefoil niche enshrining a many-armed Viṣṇu on Garuḍa—an unusual subject for the façade of a Durgā temple, but then the temple as a whole presents many puzzles. Such a superstructure is typical of the Kāśmīra style of architecture, and here reminds one of the Śiva temple of Pandrethan. Notice the wooden lobes which constitute a standard motif of Himachal architecture down to the present. (Courtesy AIIS.)



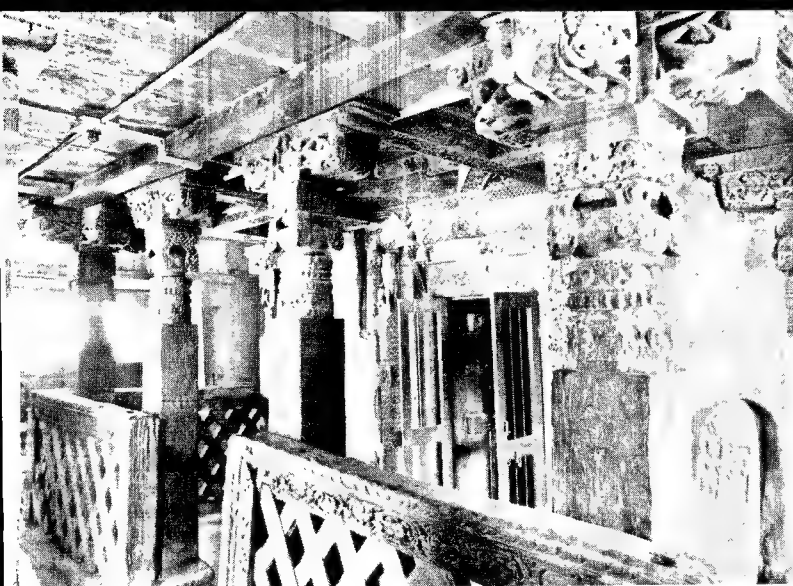


Fig. 38. Maṇḍapa of the Lakṣaṇā temple. Bharmaur, Cham-ba. Wood. Eighth-ninth century. The modern railing employs an old door-frame. (Courtesy AIIS.)

### The Lakṣaṇā temple, Bharmaur

Bharmaur, ancient capital of the Brahmapura kingdom founded by Maru probably in the sixth century, has preserved a complex of temples. Most of the temples in their present condition are much later and of no interest to us. But parts of the Lakṣaṇādevī shrine, and three brass images, of Lakṣaṇā herself, a large Nandi, and a Gaṇeśa are certainly old and date back to the Brahmapura period. To the three metal images must be added the brass image of Śaktidevī in Chhatradi. These four brass images bear inscriptions which provide us with the names of four kings of the Varman dynasty and of the Mūṣūṇa or Moṣūṇa *gotra* (clan), of Brahmapura, namely, Ādityavarman, his son Balavarman, the latter's son Divākaravarman, and Divākaravarman's son Meruvarman. It was Meruvarman who commissioned the brasses, which were cast by the artist Gugga. No date has been recorded, but palaeographically the inscriptions have been dated to circa 700 A.D.

Bharmaur is situated about 60 km. east of Cham-ba, the district headquarters, in the valley of the Budhil river; which is a tributary of the Ravi. Here, the shrine of Durgā Maḥiṣamardinī, known as Lakṣaṇā, is the earliest surviving in the sacred complex of Chaurasi or Eighty-four shrines. Its central image is the brass Durgā consecrated by Meruvarman, as recorded in its inscription.

Presently, the temple looks like any other hill temple, built as it is with alternate courses of

wooden beams and stone, not much different from civil buildings, but it retains the original nucleus and several elements of the old shrine which was also presumably erected by Meruvarman. It is rectangular on plan and faces the north. Two long narrow windows in the side walls illuminate the interior of the hall. The square sanctum with a carved doorway stands in the rear of the hall so that it can be circumambulated. The outer and sanctum doorways, pillars and pilasters of the hall, a parapet that divides the hall, and the hall ceilings all date to the original structure. The roof is covered with schist tiles.

The massive entrance doorway with its pediment and triangular gable convey some idea of the façade of the old shrine. The entrance door has six *śākhās*. The innermost band which runs around the three sides has two confronting birds on the lintel; their fanciful plumage flows out behind them and cascades down the sides to the bottom where two couples are seated; the method of fitting the lintel on the side-posts is notable. The second moulding is very thin and is decorated with scrolls. The third band is a *rūpaśākhā*, or figure-band; on each side are four divine figures, of which Brahmā and Viṣṇu Caturānamūrti can be made out, and also the river goddesses — Gaṅgā on her crocodile and Yamunā on her tortoise — on the left and right respectively; at the bottom are two *yakṣas*. The lintel has eight figures with garlands in their hands flying towards the centre, each figure being separated from the other by what looks like a *śrīvatsa* symbol or a wreath. Next is a cylindrical moulding of *campaka* flowers with a *kīrtimukha* face in the centre of the lintel. The vertical faces of the next moulding again have four weather-worn figures, and we can only discern that some are male and others female; *yakṣas* again occupy the bases. At the top the horizontal beam is relieved with twelve pairs of flying celestials moving from the flanks towards the centre, where again the *śrīvatsa* or wreath occurs. The outermost cylindrical frame carved with a scroll runs around the three sides. Near the top it flares out to form a "T" outline, the brackets so framed being occupied by heraldic lions.

An ambitious pediment rises over the door (Fig. 37). It is divided into three registers. The bottom stratum has ten *mithunas* in various attitudes



framed by pillared and arched niches. Eleven projecting struts positioned over the pillars of the lower storey define the second stratum; the intervening spaces between these struts are occupied by small figures crowned by shrine tops. On the uppermost register are ten niches similar to those below, which shelter small dwarfish persons with animal heads. Wooden pendants suspended from the front remind us of similar decoration on much later hill shrines. The whole is crowned by a triangular gable with a trefoil niche enshrining Viṣṇu Caturāṇana on Garuḍa, the attributes of his eight hands now hardly recognizable.

The pillars (Figs. 38, 41, 42) of the hall, derived from Gupta models, are square for two-thirds of the height, then are followed by an octagonal course, a compressed cushion and a lotus. The capital is *ghaṭapallava* or pot-and-foliage surmounted by a scroll abacus; the brackets depict flying figures flanking Kubera, a Kinnara couple and similar subjects.

The entire ceiling (Fig. 39) has been partitioned off into three squares, those on the sides being further divided into smaller rectangles. The central square, right in front of the sanctum, has been singled out for special treatment. Three squares of successively smaller dimensions are placed diagonally one over the other, the smallest square opening being covered by a cap-stone. The undersides

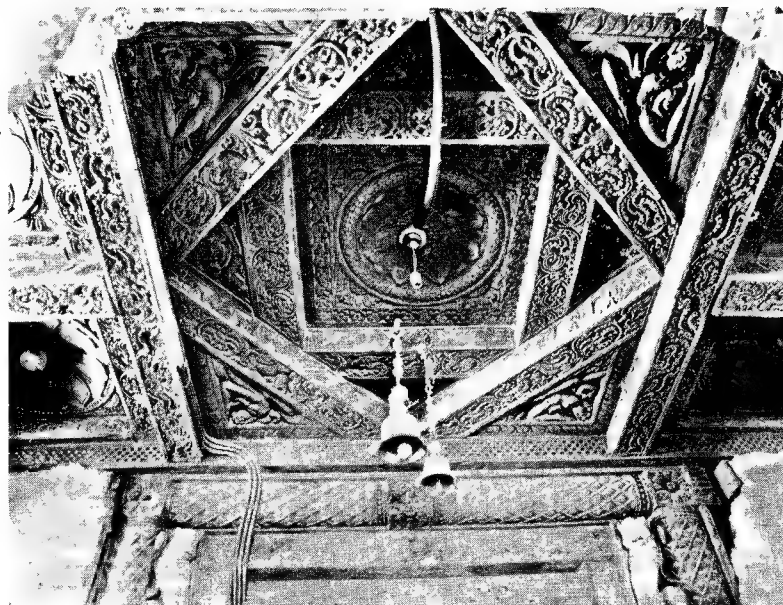
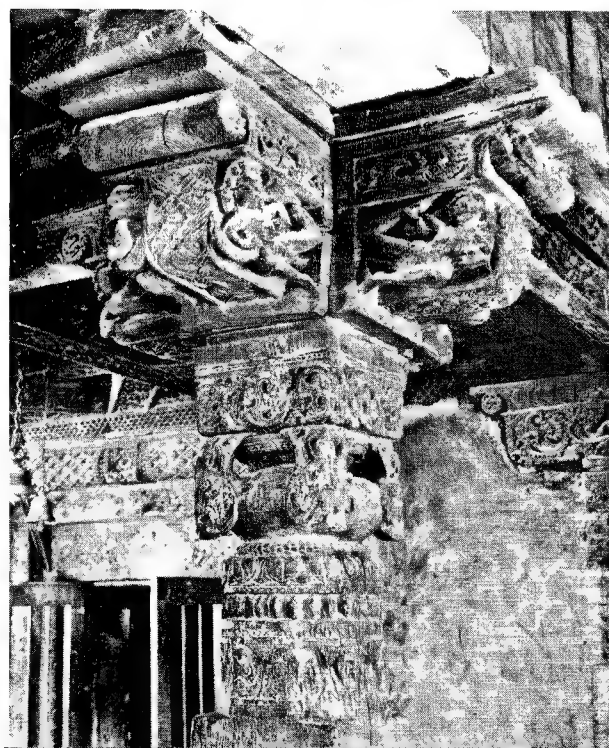


Fig. 39. Maṇḍapa ceiling. Lakṣaṇādevī temple, Bharmaur, Chamba. Eighth-ninth century. The ceiling is formed by diagonally placing three squares, one smaller than the preceding, one over the other, and then sealing the resultant central smallest square with a cap-stone. Available surface is decorated with figures of flying celestials, scrolls, etc. (Courtesy AIIS.)

Fig. 40. Wooden lintels of the outer door. Lakṣaṇā temple, Bharmaur. (Courtesy AIIS.)



Fig. 41. Wooden pillar. Lakṣaṇā temple, Bharmaur. Circa eighth century (see pp. 93-94 where an earlier date has been advocated). (Courtesy AIIS.)



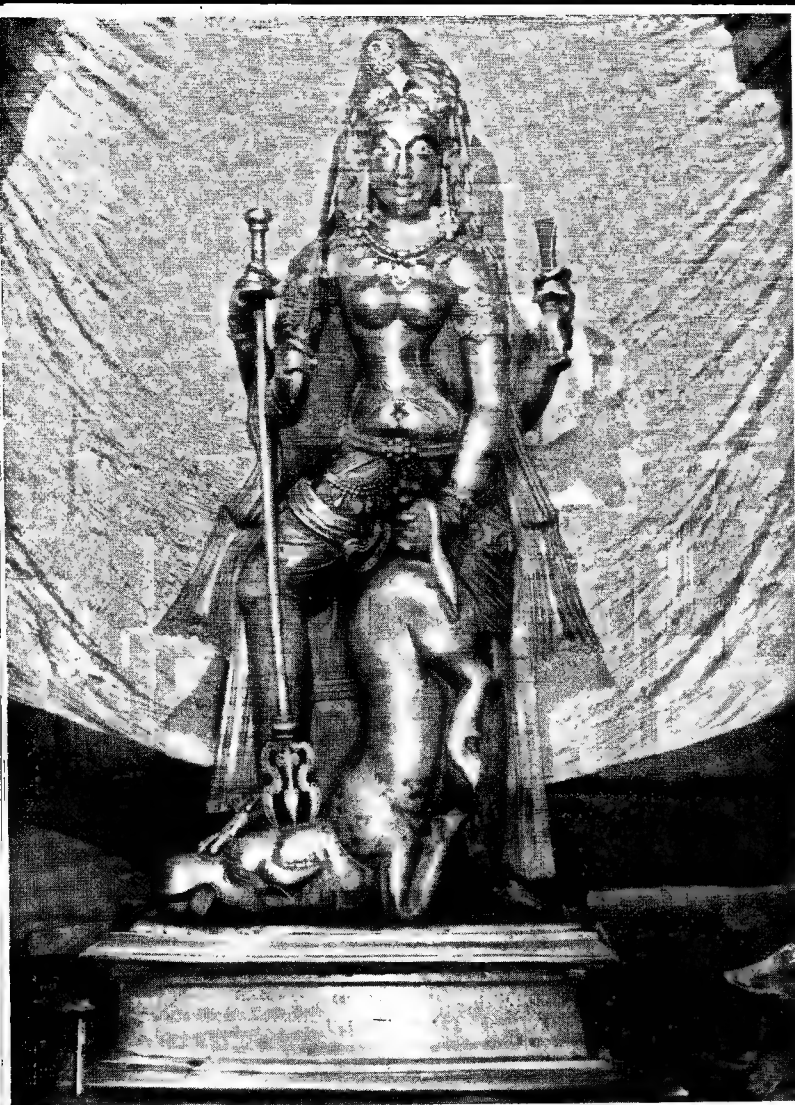


Fig. 43. *Lakṣaṇādevī*. Bronze, total height 1.25 m. *Lakṣaṇādevī* temple, Bharmaur. Circa 700 A.D. The inscription on the pedestal records that king Meruvarman of the Moṣūṇa gotra of Brahmapura, that is Bharmaur, donated the image and that the artist Gugga cast it. The same pair of donor and caster were responsible also for the Nandi (and probably also for Gaṇeśa) at Bharmaur, and for the Śaktidevī brass at Chhatradi nearby.

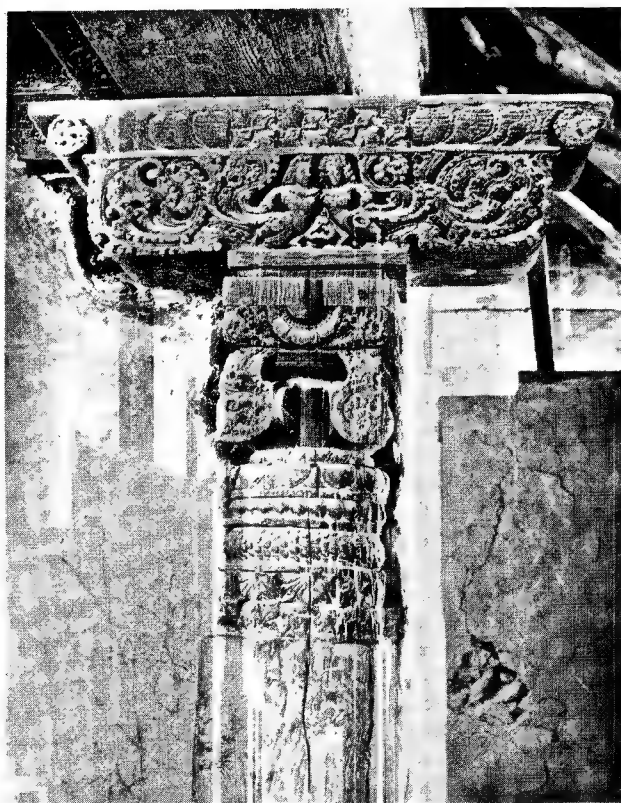


Fig. 42. Wooden pillar. *Lakṣaṇā* temple, Bharmaur. Circa eighth century. (Courtesy AIIS.)

of all this woodwork has been lavishly decorated with deeply relieved scrolls, lotus petals, and rosettes; the triangular blocks have flying figures, while the centre piece is a fully open lotus flower, all this marking the maturity of the builders.

The sanctum doorway has three *śākhās*, two *pa-traśākhās* or petal bands, followed by a "T"-shaped moulding with diamond patterns and with heraldic lions in the brackets.

No other complete temple of early date exists in Chamba or H.P., even in the more durable stone medium. But throughout history Chamba was in close cultural contacts with Kashmir. Therefore, the *Lakṣaṇā* temple can be compared with Kashmiri temples, such as those at Payar or the small Śiva shrine at Pandrethan. There, the triangular gables and trefoil windows mark the four faces;

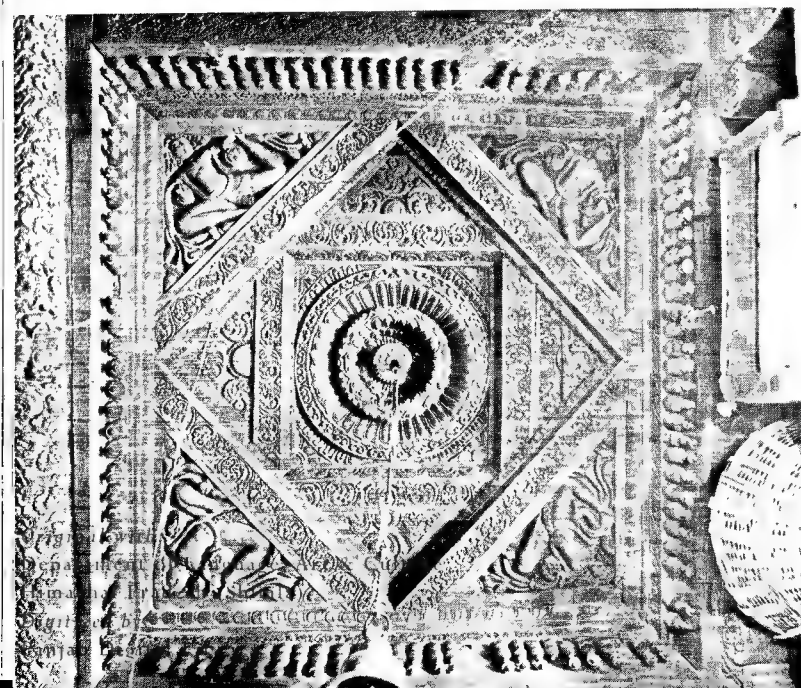


Fig. 46. Wooden ceiling of the *Śaktidevī* temple, Chhatradi. Ninth century. The decoration appears overdone, when compared with the earlier work of Bharmaur (see Fig. 39). (Courtesy AIIS.)





Fig. 44. Profile of Lakṣaṇādevī.

perhaps, when the Bharmaur shrine was entire, it too had a similar form? With Pandrethan, even the ceiling of the Lakṣaṇā shrine is comparable, in fact it shows more ornamentation, which may argue for a date later than the Pandrethan temple. But if the frontage bespeaks Kashmiri influence, the doorway and the *ghaṭapallava* pillars are pan-Indian. On consideration of the architecture of the temple, a date of circa eighth or ninth century may be ascribed to our shrine.

An inscription of king Meruvarman datable to circa 700 A.D. is engraved on the pedestal of the half life-size brass Nandi standing in front of the Maṇimaheśa temple. It is an elaborate record stating that the king himself erected (*kṛtvā svayam*) a *prāsāda*, temple, like the mythical Meru mountain, provided with various *maṇḍapas* such as a *navanābhamāṇḍapa* (*navaraṅga* hall), a *prāgrīva* or *mukhamāṇḍapa*, adorned with *candraśālās* or *caitya*-arch windows, and installed a strongly-built (*pīṇa-kapola-kāya*) bull in front of the structure.

Fig. 47. Wooden pillar. Śaktidevi temple, Chhatradi. (Courtesy AIIS.)

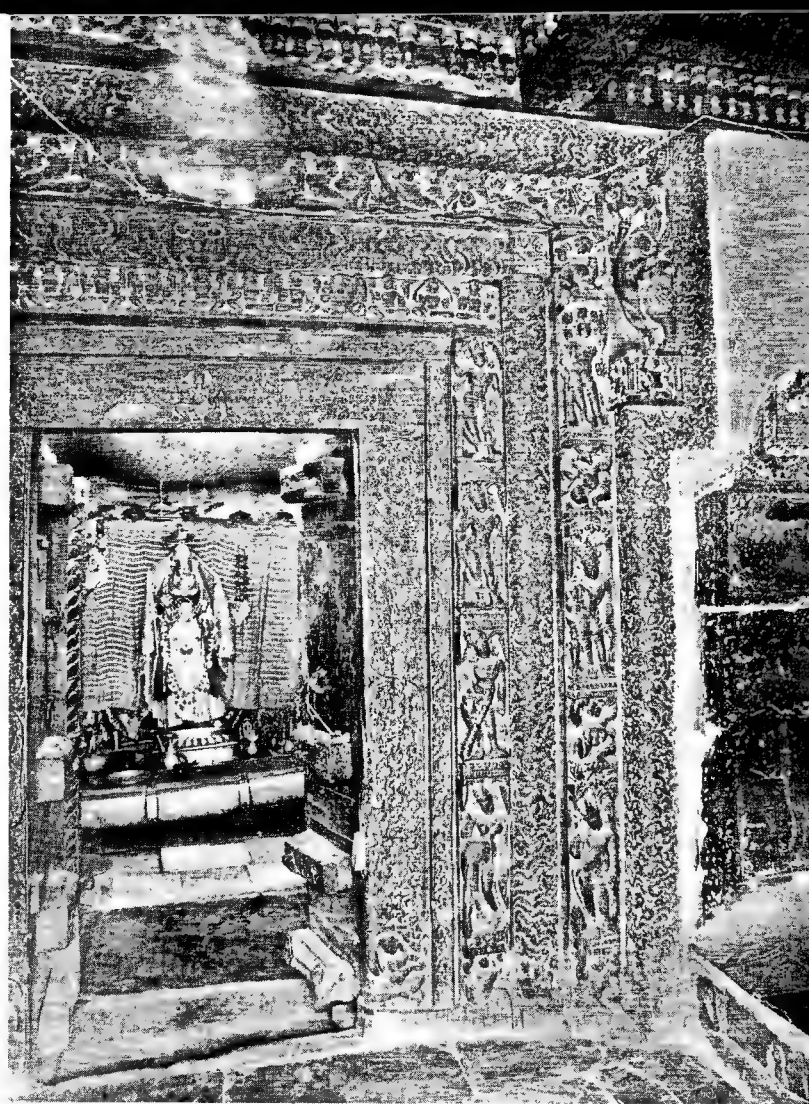


Fig. 45. Wooden door-frames. Śaktidevi temple, Chhatradi, Chamba district. Ninth century. Only the outermost frames form a "T" shape echoing Gupta conventions of the distant past. The standing figures bend their bodies with self-consciousness. (Courtesy AIIS.)





The inscription testifies to the contemporary knowledge of architectural canon. The original Maṇimaheśa shrine is not in existence. But we may not be far wrong to assume that the Lakṣaṇā temple, also built by the same king, must also have been an ambitious structure endowed with a *nava-raṅgamaṇḍapa* with nine square bays. This probably collapsed, and its components were utilized in the rebuilding at a later date.

Fig. 49. Śāktidevī's brass image in her temple at Chhatradi. Seventh century. The pedestal inscription records the names of king Meruvarman and the artist Gugga.

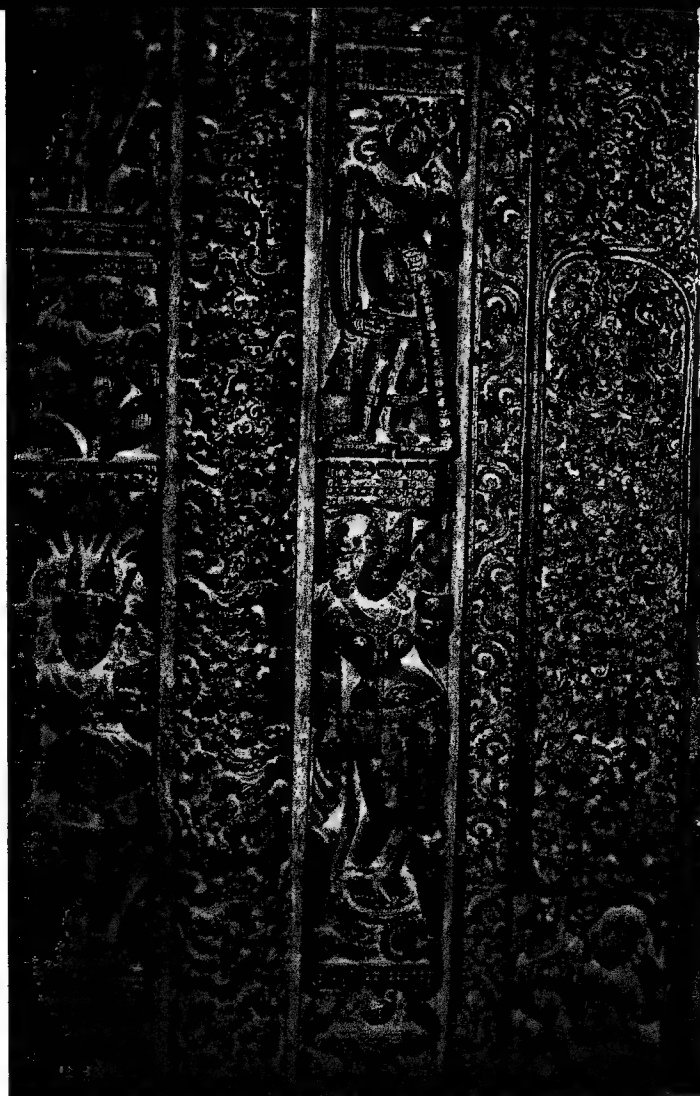


Fig. 48. Detail of wooden door-jamb. Śāktidevī temple, Chhatradi. Ninth century.

### The Śāktidevī temple, Chhatradi

Some twenty-five kilometres to the west of Brahmapura, modern Bharmaur, where Mūṣūṇavarman founded a kingdom many centuries ago and where Meruvarman ruled in circa the late seventh early eighth century, lies Chhatradi, some eight kilometres away from the modern road linking Bharmaur with Chamba, and 600-700 metres above the road's level. In the village there is an old wooden shrine of a different plan than that of the Bharmaur temple, but of the same period; and it too enshrines a brass image of Śāktidevī which, like the Lakṣaṇā image of Bharmaur, carries an inscription of king Meruvarman.

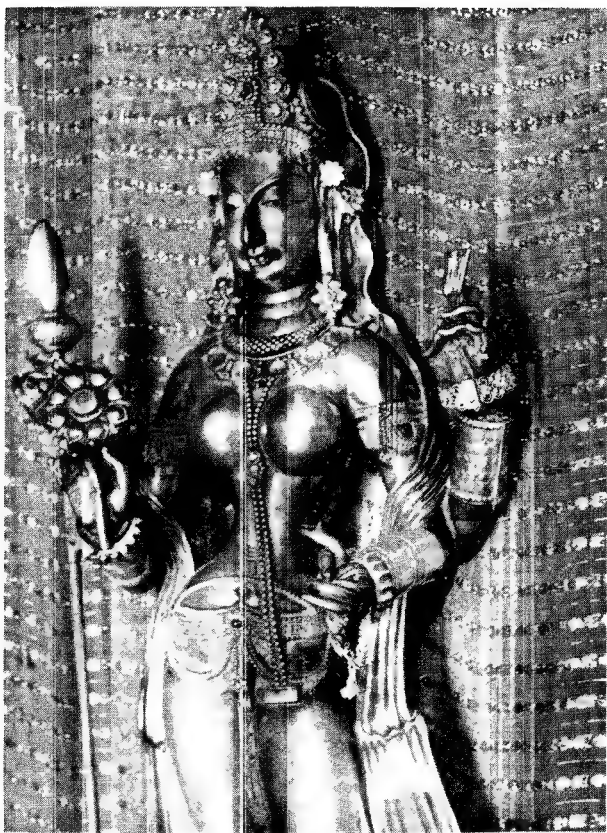
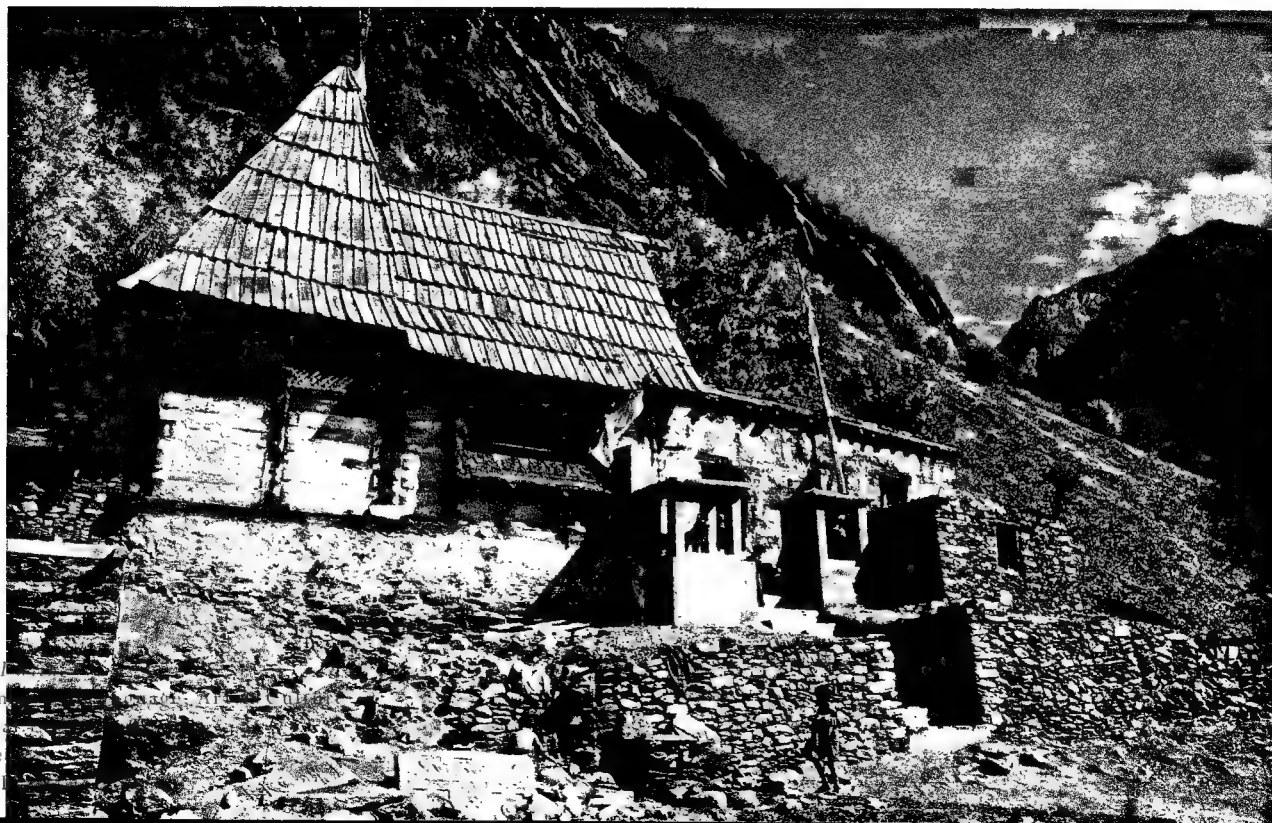


Fig. 50. Śaktidevī's profile. Chhatradi. Śaktidevī herself, as also other brass images of Lakṣaṇādevī, a Nandi and Gaṇeśa in Bharmaur, bear the records of the Varman king Meruvarman of Brahmapura. These brasses, which represent a provincial style, are datable to the seventh century or 700 A.D.

In its present form the temple consists of a cella fronted by its narrow *mukhamandapa* and surrounded on all four sides by a pillared ambulatory. Only the wooden pillars, the ceiling and the sanctum doorway are old; but apparently they are later than the image which is datable to circa 700 A.D.

Basically, the wooden pillars are of the same type as those of the Lakṣaṇā temple (Fig. 47) but they lack the verve of those of Bharmaur. Their shafts are plain square; over these there are three bands relieved with scrolls, wreaths of *campaka*, and lotus petals. The *ghaṭapallava* capitals have thick foliage which reaches down to the jar's base; the brackets are provided with pillared and arched niches with birds, scrolls and mythical animals. The ceiling too (Fig. 46) was constructed in the same way as was that of the sister shrine at Bharmaur, and has the same luxuriant but stereotyped carvings of scrolls, atlantes and lotus petals.

Fig. 51. Wooden temple of Markulādevī. Udaipur, Lahaul-Spiti district. Like many other Himachal temples Markulā's temple has parts added at different dates. The present appearance of the structure is a result of repeated reconstructions, but the inner parts are datable to the tenth-eleventh century.



The sanctum doorway has six jambs (Figs. 45, 48). The innermost jambs have two *yakṣas* at the base emitting frothing creepers from their mouths which fill up the entire surface; Gajalakṣmī is on the *lalāṭabimba*. A small plaque with a later Devāśeṣa inscription has been nailed onto this lintel. After an intervening narrow floral band, the third band is a *rūpaśākhā* or figure band with three deities and Gaṅgā/Yamunā on the left and right. On top left we can probably make out Viṣṇu Caturāṇana with his mace and conch. Under him is a forceful carving of Mahiṣamardinī, followed by a two-armed deity or attendant holding a ringed club.

The figures on the right cannot be identified, although they are well preserved. The lintel depicts twelve seated personages as well as a large grotesque face; the twelve may be divine as they have four arms. Next is a cylindrical moulding with scrolls and a *kīrtimukha* on the lintel. The moulding that follows has three standing figures alternating with four dancing dwarfs or *gaṇas*, some having a face on the stomach, or a lion's head, an elephant's ears, etc. On the lintel is a row of *vidyādhara* pairs with garlands and swords, the two in the centre holding aloft a tiara. The outermost jamb makes a "T" outline to accommodate two heraldic lions in the brackets. In the centre is a female, from whose flanks emerge endless scrolls that fill up the jambs.

The walls of the temple were latterly plastered over and adorned with mythological paintings in the eighteenth-nineteenth century, to which date presumably the lintel epigraph may also belong.

There may not be a great difference in age between the two wooden shrines at Bharmaur and Chhatradi, situated within a short distance of each other, but between them, the shrine of Bharmaur is relatively earlier. Its figure sculpture presents the smooth anatomy of the Indian plains (flying *vidyādhara*s, atlantes on the ceiling). In Chhatradi, by contrast, there is a strong Kashmiri influence (notice the pronounced pectorals, the deep-set navel). Again, ornamental patterns have been rendered in a mechanistic way in Chhatradi: consider the way in which the floral creepers on the ceiling beams (Fig. 46) have been regimented into roundels; or the capsule-like lotus petals.

## The Markulādevī Temple, Udaipur

The small village of Udaipur in Lahaul-Spiti district possesses a wooden temple of Kālī known as Markulādevī, that shows a juxtaposition of Buddhistic with Brahmanical influences. The exterior of the temple (Fig. 51), with its sloping roof, together with the image of the sanctum, is a very late product of the seventeenth century, but inside, the temple is older. However, even here an earlier and a later phase must be distinguished. The temple faces east, and comprises a sanctum with its ambulatory, a pillared *maṇḍapa* and, surrounding this, the later outer shell. The doorframes of the *garbhagrha*, four *maṇḍapa* pillars and the ceiling of the *maṇḍapa* are the oldest surviving parts, while two huge window panels on the south side, the ceiling architraves and two pillars of the *maṇḍapa* are later. Some evidence of still later activity can also be seen, for example, a *dvārapāla* whose fierce visage is very similar to some wooden demon masks of Chhatradi (Figs. 71, 72).

The doorway can be seen as a further development from Bharmaur and Chhatradi. It consists of seven *śākhās* or frames, the innermost being a thin frame with scrollwork, followed by a frame containing small figures within oval-shaped medallions; a narrow stencilled band follows this, then one of a circular section. The fifth is a *rūpaśākhā* or figure-band depicting the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu (Fig. 53). The band next to this is a flowered-wreath, while the outermost frame contains Gaṅgā-Yamunā and other figures. The lintels depict a row of shrine models with gable roof of the Kashmiri type which we have seen already in Bharmaur.

The ceiling (Figs. 125-127) is divided into nine bays, a large square is in the centre, surrounded by four oblongs and four squares. The central square is richly decorated with a lotus, *kīrtimukhas* and *makaras*; around the lotus a concentric border of *vajras* is noteworthy for showing Buddhist influence. The oblong panels on the east and west sides of the ceiling have panels of *vidyādhara* and *gandharva* pairs flying and playing upon musical instruments as also smaller figures of dancers, etc. The oblong panel on the west has a sixteen-armed dancing Śiva, together with Pārvatī, Gaṇeśa, Kārtikeya and Nandi. The oblong panel on the northern side of the ceiling is the most interesting, for it





Fig. 52. Wooden temple of Markulādevī. Udaipur, Lahaul-Spiti district. Panel representing the churning of the ocean. Circa thirteenth century.

Fig. 53. Detail of the door-frame of the Markulādevī temple, Udaipur, showing Viṣṇu's incarnations. Wood. The frames date to the eleventh century, but other parts are later.

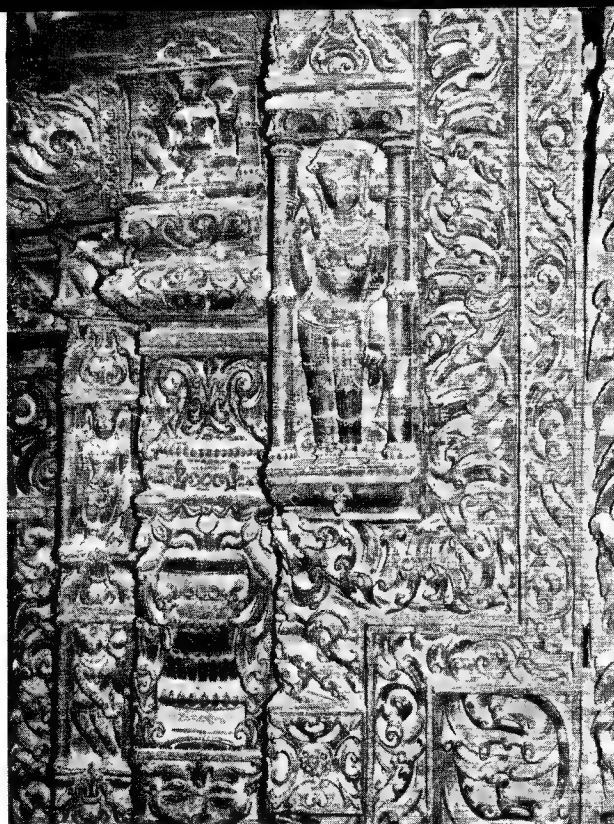


Fig. 54. Detail from wooden door-frame. Dakṣeśvara temple, Nirmand, Kullu. Eleventh-twelfth century. A large and elaborate wooden temple must have stood here, of which only the door remains.

Fig. 55. Wooden temple of Parāśara Ṛṣi. Parashar, Mandi district. About fourteenth century, with late additions. Note the false chamber, without a door, between the roofs.



depicts not a Brahmanical theme but a Buddhist one, that of the Buddha subduing Māra. The Buddha clad in monastic robes sits on his diamond seat, calling the earth to witness, Māra's beautiful daughters try to seduce him by dancing and music; his warriors, some with animal heads, train their weapons at the Buddha or make loud noise to distract him. And Māra himself approaches on a war chariot for a final assault.

The doorway and the ceiling must be from the original temple. It is difficult to date this part precisely, in the absence of securely dated monuments, but so much is certain that Udaipur is to be seen as marking a later stage in the artistic tradition of Bharmaur and Chhatradi. The figural and decorative work of the latter site, itself dry and academic when compared to Bharmaur, has congealed further, therefore, a date in the tenth century may be suggested for this earliest work at Udaipur.

The two large window panels (Fig. 52) and the architraves of the ceiling represent a later stage, perhaps the twelfth century. One depicts the Trivikrama incarnation of Viṣṇu, with the full complement of personages including Vāmana, Bali, the king of the underworld and other deities. If the Trivikrama story is conceived in the pan-Indian iconographic style, the other panel portrays the myth of the churning of the ocean in its local version, for, instead of the mount Mandāra, here the churning cord is coiled around a peacock.

## INDIGENOUS WOODEN TEMPLES

Although the few surviving remains indicate that temples both of stone and wood must have been built in Himachal Pradesh ever since the advent of North Indian culture, the greater number of temples are of rather late dates. This is because, unlike in the rest of the country where temples could stand unchanged for many centuries, in Himachal, they have always been subject to a process of perpetual renewal; since wood is a prominent building material, forest fires and lightning account for much loss, and also earthquakes, which are quite frequent. This perpetual process of replacing older art forms with newer products extended also to the *mohras* made of metal, as will appear from later

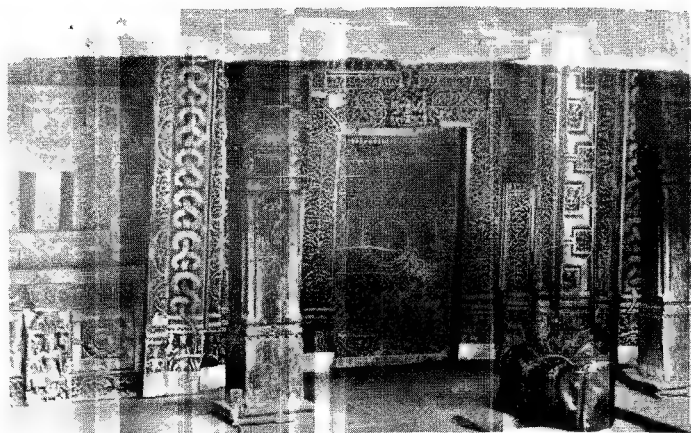


Fig. 56. Façade of the Parāśara temple. Wood. Circa fourteenth century.

Fig. 57. Door-frames of the Parāśara temple. Wood. Fourteenth century. The angular meander with garland-bearers harks back to such early monuments as Ajanta; the inter-twined serpents are a Pratihāra motif. The figural repertoire (garland-bearers, adorers, kīrtimukha), as also the deeply undercut and luxuriating scrolls bespeak a vigorous tradition. Only a royal patron could have undertaken such an ambitious temple; legend ascribes the building to king Ban Sen (died 1346 A.D.). The carving of the scrolls strongly resembles that on the Devī temple at Naopano, about ten kilometres away.

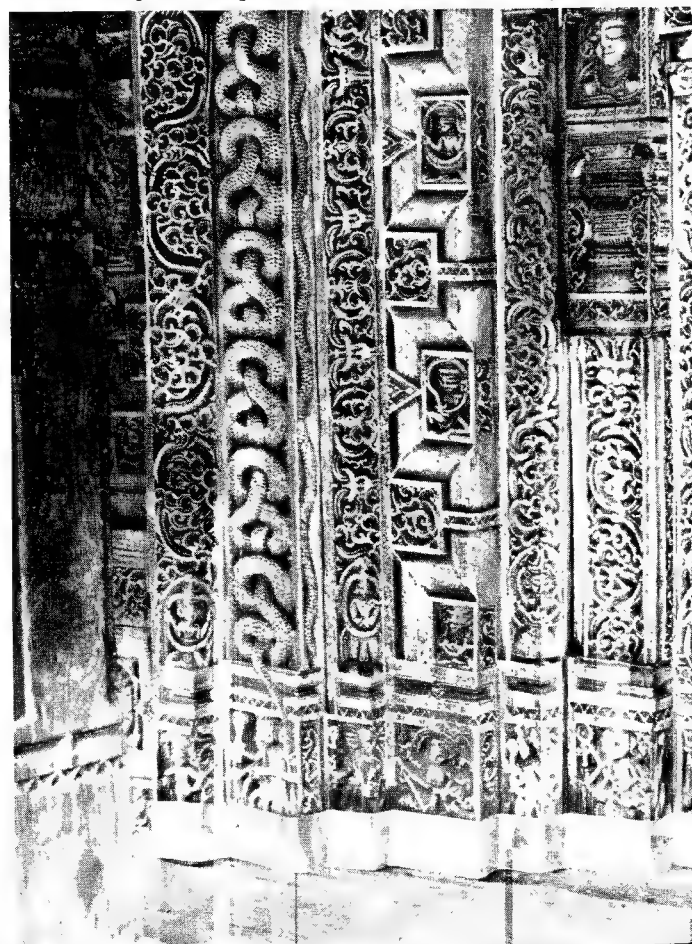




Fig. 58. Top corner of the door-way, Parāśara temple. Fourteenth century. Note the mohra.

Fig. 60. Grilled window. Parāśara temple. Circa fourteenth century.

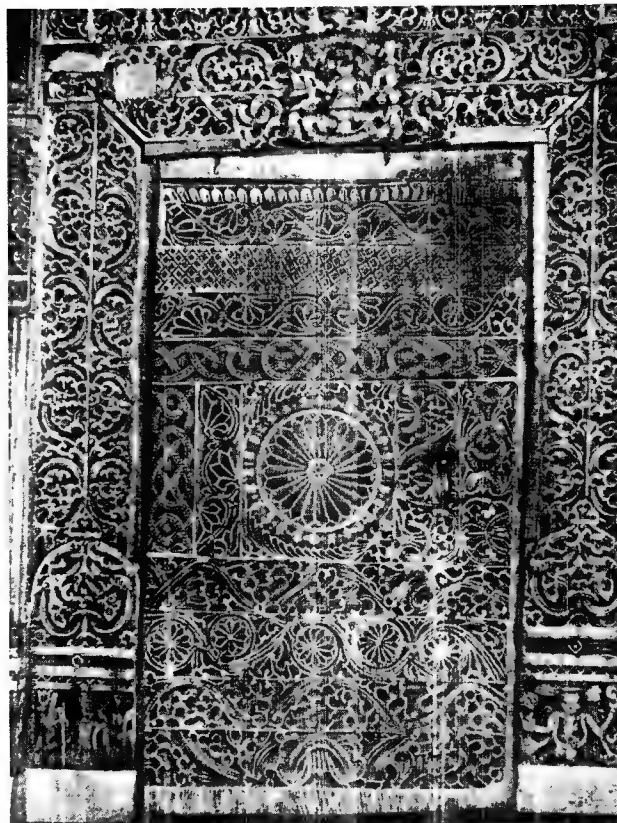
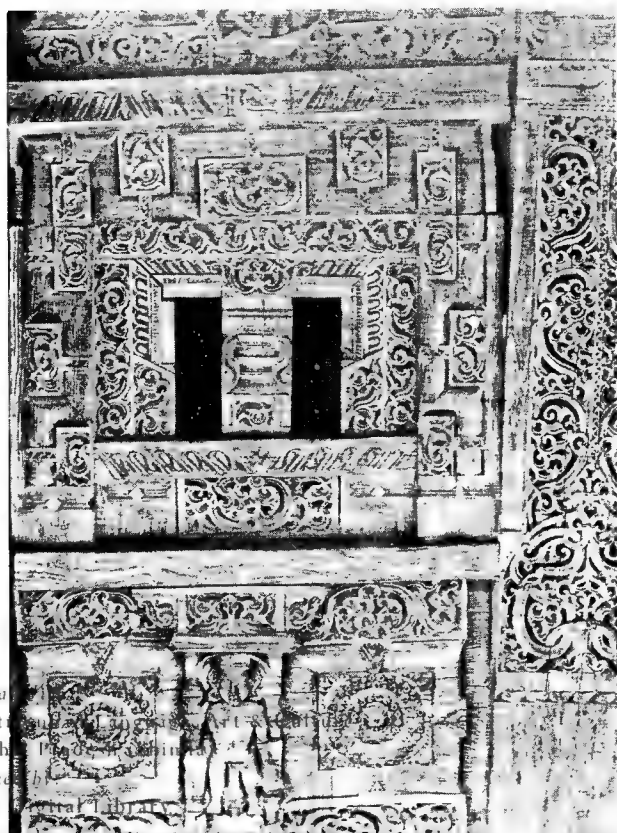


Fig. 59. The innermost frame and the massive wooden door, Parāśara temple. The door itself may be late, seventeenth-eighteenth century, for it compares with the carving of the temple at Kigas a few kilometres away, but the frames around it are more ancient (except for the bottom figures, probably re-carved).

sections of this book, for those damaged by fire or worn out because of constant worship were melted and cast afresh.

Structures which were originally intended for quite different purposes, such as palaces, forts, watch towers and rich landholder's residences, were sometimes converted to serve as temples. Such buildings are left out of our survey; however, the images and *mohras* which they enshrine are being discussed in their appropriate places. Here, we deal with only the temples properly so-called, which were built in wood in an indigenous style of Himachal Pradesh.

These shrines, built of wood alone or wood combined with stone, and of late date, are either





Fig. 61. Durgā Mahiṣamardini over the window. Parāśara temple. Obviously, this is a later carving, for the deep-chiselled curvaceous forms have been replaced here by flat and angular shapes, and the composition is poor (agitated Durgā is shown in stark frontal view, the buffalo in stark profile). This and similar carvings must be later than the Hidimbā temple of Manali, of 1553 A.D.

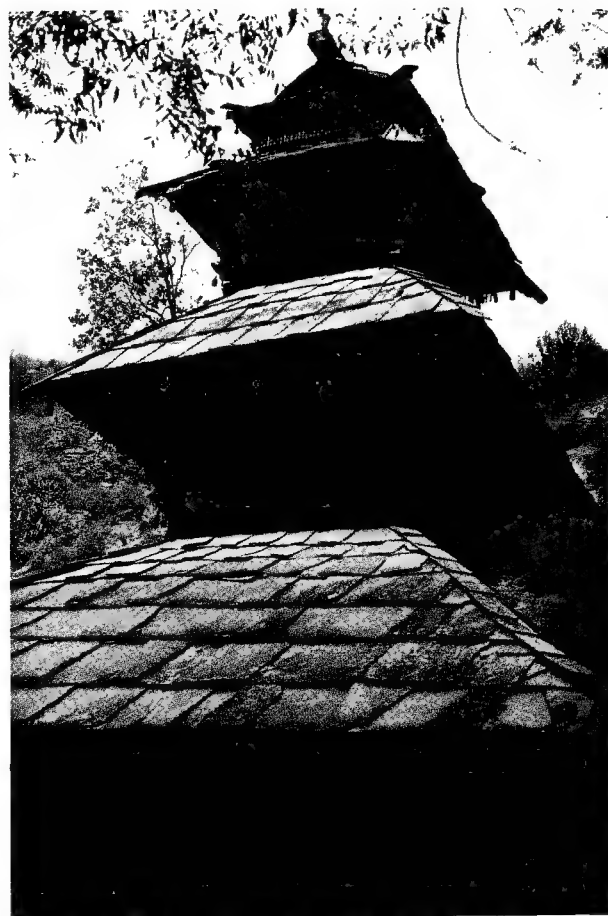


Fig. 63. Superstructure of the Ādi Brahmā temple. Khokhan. Datable to 1746 A.D.



square or rectangular on plan, and an outer shell of alternate courses of wooden beams and stone may be built around the sanctum; when the temple is rectangular on plan, the sanctum is placed towards the rear of the *mandapa*, with a passage for circumambulation (Behena, Shrambal). The *mandapa* has square wooden pillars supporting the roof (Behena, Parashar), but in most cases the full complement of pillars have not survived.

But it is their elevation that gives to these structures their individuality. The walls of the sanctum are raised up over the roof of the larger square enclosing the sanctum, to a height of about two metres, and covered over by a slanting roof which

Fig. 62. The churning of the ocean, panel over a carved window of the Parāśara temple. The same date as for Fig. 61.



Fig. 64. Ādi Puruṣa temple. Tibri, Mandi district. Probably eighteenth century. The shallow-pitched roofs create an elegant appearance. The temple's bhandar a short distance away preserves mohras.

projects to a considerable extent. Above this, the superstructure is extended further, to a short height, to be finally covered by a conical roof. Thus, altogether three roofs result, the two lower ones of a square plan, and the uppermost roof of conical shape. Sometimes, however, one more fourth chamber is added. A pleasing effect is also created by the varying pitch of these roofs, some being of a shallow pitch (Naggar, Fig. 66) while a few others of a sharp pitch (Khokhan, Figs. 21, 63). They are covered with large slate tiles which are often fitted to the understructure with nails, to prevent their flying off in the winds; they slope out, so as to drain off the snow.

The upper chambers are never functional, their only purpose being to increase the height of the building in keeping with the form of the classical temple. As chambers, they are false; in the planning of the temple, no access is ever provided up the roof by means of ladders etc., to reach the chamber, and if one does climb up somehow, there

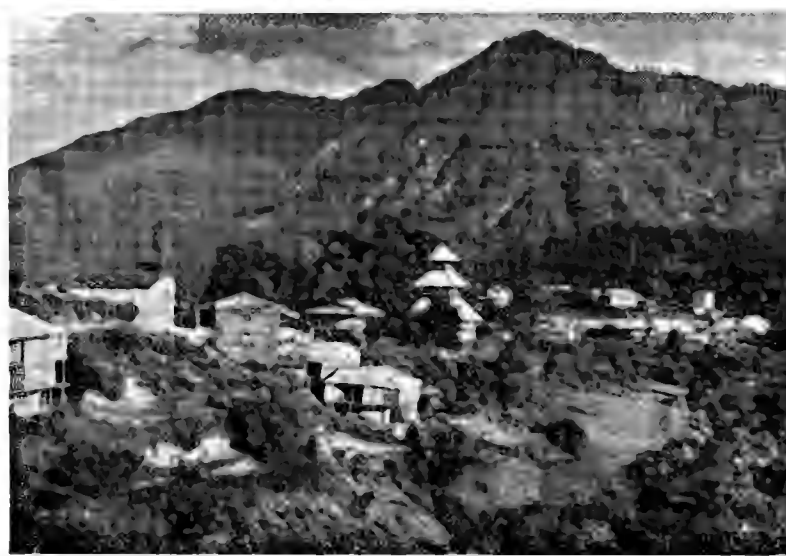


Fig. 65. Trijugi Narayan temple. Diyar, Kullu district. Wood and stone. Seventeenth-eighteenth century. Ladakhi Buddhist bronzes of the thirteenth-fourteenth century are installed in the sanctum (not illustrated); the mohras of the deity were illustrated in ASI AR 1907-08, Pl. LXXXIV.



Fig. 66. Tripurasundarī temple, Naggar. Wood and stone. Seventeenth-eighteenth century, but the roofs are still later.

is no door giving entrance inside. From the grilled windows which decorate all the four walls the inner empty space can be clearly seen.

In the following we survey a few of the more interesting wooden shrines of Kullu and Mandi districts:

- (1) The temple of the R̥ṣi Parāśara at Parashar (see map), Mandi district, is situated atop a range of hills at a height of nearly 3,000 metres above the mean sea level (Figs. 23, 55). It consists of a square sanctum surrounded by four wooden pillars on each side, the whole again enclosed within an outer shell built of alternate courses of wooden beams and large stones; a narrow passage for ritual circumambulation thus results.

The walls of the sanctum are richly carved

with floral motifs and images of deities; grilled windows decorate each side (Figs. 56, 60). From the degree of embellishment on the outer wall of the sanctum it appears likely that the structure which now encloses it is not part of the original design, but is a later construction. The walls of the sanctum are extended above the sloping roof to form upper chambers with their own roofs (Fig. 55).

The Parashar temple is one of the most elaborate and ambitious structures, which only a royal patron could have executed. According to tradition king Ban Sen (died 1346) constructed it, which may well be true. However, like most other Himalayan temples, this temple, too, has undergone later repairs. For while the carving on the whole is vigorous, and its motifs hark back to classical prototypes (Fig. 57), some panels of Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, or the churning of the ocean (Figs. 61, 62) are in an angular two-dimensional style characteristic of the period of king Bahadur Singh of Kullu (circa 1550) and later.

- (2) Of the timber temples of Himachal Pradesh, the one most well known is that of Hiḍimbā or Hirma at Dhungri, Manali (Fig. 20). It is

Fig. 68. Wooden temple. Shrambal, Simla district. Seventeenth-eighteenth century. The temple, faced by a maṇḍapa, is square on plan, with a sanctum placed at the rear with space for circumambulation. The temple is ruined, but its plan corresponds to the larger and better preserved Behena temple (Fig. 9).



of some interest, being one of the few precisely datable temples since it bears on its doorway an inscription of Mahārāja Bahadur Singh of Śāstra Saṁvat 28/29, that is 53 = 1553 A.D. But only the façade and side windows are original, the rest of the structure including the roofs being much later. It stands on a raised platform, is square on plan consisting only of a sanctum with an open pillared veranda. The wooden façade is elaborately carved; the Navagrahas, Mahi-  
 samardinī and some processional scenes can be recognised, as also some decorative motifs of birds and creepers. Inside, the sanctum enshrines a huge natural rock; the Devī's *mohras* are kept in the *bhandar* in the old village. A sloping overhanging roof covered with wooden slats rests on twelve pillars. The pillars themselves and the entire superstructure of three more roofs separated by two constricted registers were rebuilt recently (see Introduction).

- (3) The Ādi-Brahmā temple, Khokhan. The village Khokhan is situated about two kilometres away from Shamshi, a village lying between Bhuntar and Kullu, in Kullu district (see map). It is square on plan and consists of a sanctum with an open pillared veranda on all four sides, the overall dimensions being about five metres by five metres, and the height about ten metres (Fig. 21).

The height of the temple is raised by means of as many as three smaller false chambers built one over the other on the sanctum, thus, a total of four sloping roofs result, over the sanctum and over the upper chamber (Fig. 63). All the four overhanging roofs of the sanctum project well over their respective rooms. The upper rooms, of course, are merely closed cages built entirely of wood and adorned with grilled windows. An elaborate framework of twisted wooden brackets rise up from the floor of each of the upper rooms and supports the low heavy roofs. The four ponderous tile-covered roofs alternating with the airy wooden chambers give a very picturesque aspect to the temple.

The doorway mouldings depict creepers, diamonds and worshippers. While the cult object installed in the sanctum is featureless,

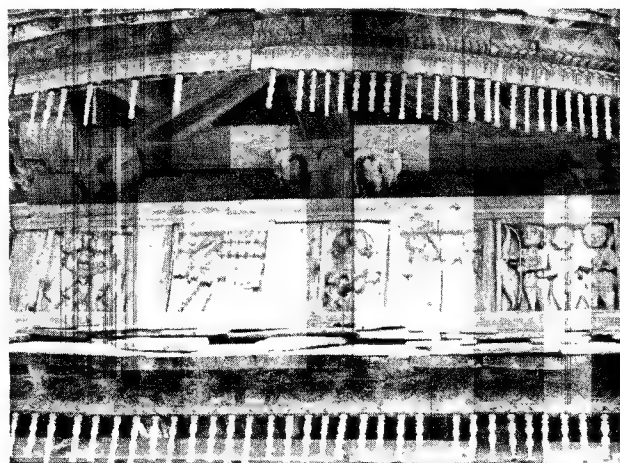


Fig. 67. Stone and timber temple of Sandhyā, Jagatsukh, Kullu. Sixteenth-seventeenth century. An earlier temple must have existed here, as indicated by a small stone shrine of Gauṛī-Saṅkara, and some fragments.

the *rathā* of Ādi-Brahmā has about one dozen silver and brass *mohras*, described in their appropriate places, the principal mask of silver bearing an inscription which records the name of Mahārāja Teḍhi Singh and Śāstra year 22, which must refer to  $24 + 22 = 46 = 1746$  A.D., when that king was ruling in Sultanpur, and this must be the date of the temple as well.

But a more ancient shrine must have stood at this place. Some ten or twelve stone sculptures of about the eleventh century and comparable in style to those of Yoginisthan

Fig. 69. "Balcony" of the false upper chamber, temple at Shrambal. Rāmāyaṇa scenes adorn the balcony.





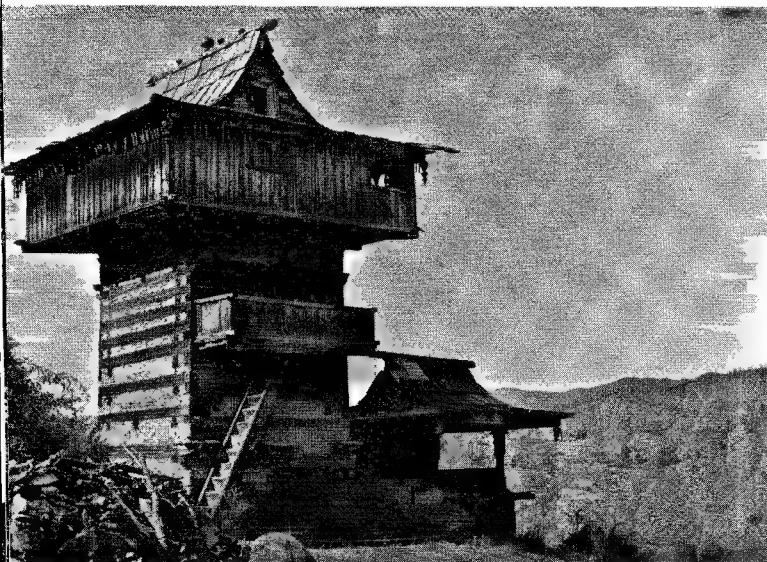


Fig. 70. Wood and stone building serving as a temple, Gazta, Simla district. There are many instances of civil or military structures (palaces, forts) later transformed as houses of gods.

nearby are placed in a room next to the temple. One of them probably represents Brahmānī, and may have been enshrined in the older sanctum along with Brahmā, her consort, who must have been the principal deity, but this could not be ascertained by us on our visit, as the room is out of bounds to visitors. Architectural fragments relieved with small *candraśālā* motifs etc. serving as steps of the present temple and strewn here and there also confirm the existence of an earlier stone temple, the same which enshrined the stone Brahmānī, or a still earlier all-stone structure.

- (4) While the temple of Parāśara is four hours' walking distance from the road-head of Baggi, the Ādi-Puruṣa shrine at Tihri in the Uttarsal tract on the border of Mandi and Kullu districts is more easily accessible and only at a distance of about one kilometre, 30 minutes climb, from the newly laid but unmetalled road connecting Kataula with Bajaura (see map; Fig. 64). The temple is square on plan and has two square and one conical sloping roofs as at Parashar, but the rich surface ornamentation of the latter place is missing. Pairs of curved brackets rise up from the floor of the upper storey up

to its roof, presenting a very elegant appearance. In the nearby *bhandar* about one dozen silver visages of Brahmā are arranged in a sloping fashion on a *ratha*, as we see in Kullu proper. In the absence of any carving it is not possible to guess the date, but this shrine must be later than that of Parashar.

- (5) The Mahādeva temple, Behena, Kullu district (Fig. 9). Behena is a village about ten kilometres north of Sainj on the road to

Fig. 71. Guardian of Markulādevī temple. Udaipur, Lahaul-Spiti district. Circa seventeenth century.







Fig. 72. Demon masks in Chhatradi. Wood. Circa sixteenth century. Six such masks are worn by the villagers who enact an annual ritual battle between Śaktidevī and these autochthonous evil spirits.

Ani, in the outer Saraj tract of Kullu (see map). The Śiva temple is a large and impressive building of rectangular plan, about twelve metres long and eight metres broad, with a *śikhara* rising about ten metres high. It consists of a *maṇḍapa* with a square sanctum placed towards its rear with provision of a narrow circumambulatory path around the sanctum. The *maṇḍapa* has a low or half wall all around; the inner side of this wall is provided with a continuous seat, the half wall itself forming a sloping seat-back relieved on its outer side by paired pilasters placed at regular intervals. The similarity of this arrangement with the *vedikā* half wall and *kakṣāsana* seat-back of medieval temples of northern India is striking. The roof, covered with heavy tiles of schist, slopes over the hall in two steps. The sanctum is extended above by two false storeys.

Some architectural fragments and a few miniature all-stone shrines stretch the sanctity of Behena farther back in time than the date of the present temple. A solitary stone sculpture of about the ninth century is embedded in the front wall of the sanctum. And inside the sanctum rests a metal bust of a Śaiva character (Fig. 291), which is certainly older than the fourteen masks which

keep it company, probably as early as the eighth century. Its rather grotesquely smiling cherubic face is reminiscent of the stone sculpture identified with Śiva which was excavated in Mansar (Nagpur district of Maharashtra), and datable to circa eighth-ninth century A.D.

- (6) Viṣṇu temple, Kigas, Mandi district, is situated a few kilometres before Naopano (see map). Obviously repaired several times, the temple's ornamentation is a travesty of its former self. But a stone sculpture of Viṣṇu is chosen for illustration (Fig. 81). Its trefoil crown, pointed aureole, fluttering scarves and its general physiognomy brings it into relationship with Bajaura, which is only some fifteen kilometres away. This Viṣṇu must have adorned the sanctum of an earlier temple of the tenth century. Notice the small figure of Pṛthvī between Viṣṇu's feet.
- (7) Temple of Devī Ambikā, Naopano, district Mandi. Naopano is situated about ten kilometres from Panarsa on the National

Fig. 73. The Paraśurāma temple. Nirmand, Kullu. Presently a conglomeration of structures, combining a bhandar with the temple proper, this was a reputed centre, where a rope-sliding ritual took place every twelve years; in recent times, however, the ceremony has occurred less frequently. The Nirmand copper-plate of the seventh century, the inscribed Śujunidevī bust of 1026 A.D. and some of the carvings described here belong to this temple.



Highway from Mandi to Kullu (see map). A partly tarred minor road branches from the highway towards the left and gradually climbs to the village of Naopano. Although ten kilometres away from the village, both the National Highway and the Beas river can be clearly seen, some 1,000 metres below.

Several people volunteered the information that the temple was a large structure which was damaged by lightning and what remains of the original shrine clearly bears

out their account. In the present condition only the small square wooden sanctum with a tile-covered roof is preserved. Though the temple cannot be much earlier than that of Hiḍimbā of Manali datable to 1553 A.D., it employs in its door-frames, the *stambha* or pillar *śākhā* and angular meander of earlier times (as in Parashar, Fig. 57). The three walls of the sanctum are pierced by pillared windows and above them, in the centre of the architraves, are small images of Śiva-Pārvatī, Sūrya and Viṣṇu.

## SCULPTURE OF HIMACHAL

WHEN THE DYNASTIES of Madhyadeśa extended their power to the present state of Himachal Pradesh they must have exported their sculptural styles to the inner Himalayas as well. We may reasonably assume that this process started from the time of the Guptas, especially Samudragupta, and continued through the successive dynasties. The earliest temples known so far are not much older than the eighth-ninth century: the structural temple of Bajaura, the wooden temple of Lakṣaṇādevī at Bharmaur (although parts of this may be older), or the rock-cut Thakurdwar of Masrur. But this lack of more ancient art may be attributed to the natural causes described previously (earthquake, fire), or to a lack of sustained field work. Since the present work is exclusively devoted to little known antiquities of Himachal, in this chapter we illustrate stone and wood sculptures, especially from Kullu, and some metal images from Bharmaur-Chhatradi, most of which have remained unpublished.

## THE SCULPTURE OF NIRMAND

Two wood and stone temples of Paraśurāma and Ambikā, of late dates, and one of Śiva Dakṣeśvara of about the eleventh century, as also a dozen miniature stone shrines, illustrated in the account of the architecture, bespeak Nirmand's importance. But the village is several centuries older than all these medieval monuments. A copper-plate

inscription in the possession of the Paraśurāma temple's management committee of Nirmand, and dated to around the sixth-seventh century A.D., describes Nirmaṇḍa as an *agrahāra*, and records the grant of a village to some Brāhmaṇas for (the maintenance of) Śiva Tripurāntaka, also called Kapāleśvara, by Mahāsāmanta Mahārāja Samudrasena. Śiva had been installed, under the name Mihireśvara, by Samudrasena's mother Mihiralakṣmī. The plate also mentions Samudrasena's three direct predecessors, Varuṇasena, Sañjayasena and Raviṣeṇa, who are also given the same title of Mahāsāmanta Mahārāja. It would seem, therefore, that the same house ruled in Nirmand and its neighbourhood for perhaps fifty to one hundred years before the sixth-seventh century, the date of the plate, as feudatories (*mahāsāmantas*) of some other dynasty.

The temple named by Samudrasena was certainly older than his own time, for the record goes on to confirm a land grant previously made by Mahārāja Śarva. It is significant that Śarva is not qualified by the inferior title of Mahāsāmanta; though the dynasty to which he belonged, or the name of his capital, are not mentioned in the plate, it is possible, as we saw in the historical narrative of Himachal, that this king was the same as Śarvarman, the Maukhari king of Kanauj, who ruled from about 565 to 580 A.D., and that Samudrasena



Fig. 74. Male figure with a companion. Stone, height 1 metre. Preserved in the compound of the Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand, Kullu district. Late sixth or early seventh century. This is an architectural piece, and may well have formed part of the temple mentioned in Samudrasena's Nirmand copper-plate of the late sixth-early seventh century A.D.

and his predecessors were the vassals of that dynasty.

The inscription, thus, records the existence of a temple, and probably also continuous architectural activity, during the span of three generations — first Mahārāja Śarva, followed by queen Mihirlakṣmī, then her son Mahāsāmanta Mahārāja Samudrasena.

The Nirmand copper-plate has been known to scholars since as far back as 1848, but no remains of early temples had come to light; we have now discovered five carvings in the village which are datable to the sixth-seventh century, and may probably be the remains of the same temple or temples spoken of in the plate.

They are made of local micaceous stone which is not very good for carving as it peels off easily, but this fact is noteworthy, for it shows that the sculptures are local products. They are: (1) an architectural piece with a male figure and an attendant, (2) a panel of Kṛṣṇa lifting up the Govardhana Mountain, (3) a door lintel with *gaṇas*, scrolls and other carvings, (4) a *vyāla*, and (5) a pillar. There is one more pillar, and a human figure, but they have been reworked so completely, in recent times, that they must be written off.

- (1) The male figure with an attendant is part of an architectural piece, probably one side of a doorway (height 1 m.; Figs. 74, 75). Until 1983 it was lying in the legendary *bhandar* of the Paraśurāma temple, the principal shrine of Nirmand, unknown even to the villagers, but has now been set up in the temple compound. The figure stands with a slight bend of the body under a mango tree heavy with fruit; the position of his right foot with the heel slightly raised suggests as though he were taking a step forward. A cloth is wrapped around his thighs, then carried up over the left shoulder and around the arm so that the loose end falls to his proper left side. The adornment of his head is noteworthy, for on the one hand it consists of an ornamental crest, but on the other hand, the hair is tightly pulled up and then arranged in a fan-shaped knot over the top of the head (Fig. 75) such as we see in Śaiva sculptures. Heavy earrings, a necklace, arm-

bands and bracelets are the other ornaments. The right hand holds some object delicately, with the tips of the thumb and the index finger; the arm is bent at the elbow, as though to rest on the shoulder of his companion. The left hand rests against his thigh. The moustachioed face, as also the entire surface of this fine carving, is chipped, but we can discern that the eyes are rather large, the nose flat and broad, and the mouth agape with a protruding tongue, suggesting a fearsome deity; yet, from the general setting of the scene it does not appear that the sculptor intended to represent a terrifying personage.

The companion figure is of smaller stature. He too wears a loin cloth; his face is damaged, but a closer look reveals that he has a beard, as also a head-dress similar to his master's; while he also holds a thick open-ended garland in both hands. Two ornamental bands with garland-emitting *vyālas* and a *gaṇa* top the main panel.

At first glance the panel appears to represent a prince, and one may have left it at that without looking for any specific theme, but some of its features are puzzling. The gaping mouth and knotted hair give a Śaiva character to the carving: a coiffure consisting of part-*jaṭā* and part-crown is a combination we would expect in an Ardhanārī, but the present sculpture is clearly not Śiva's androgynous form. Again, if the artist's intention was to suggest that the figure is walking, then Śiva as mendicant roaming in the forest (mango grove) may have been depicted. No precise identification is possible.

- (2) Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhara (80×70 cm; Fig. 76). Standing against a plain background, the youthful hero lifts up the mountain represented by a single slab extending from one end to the other, with rocks marked on its surface. Balarāma probably holds a plough. Both wear loin cloths, their hair is coiled up. On one side, a herd of cattle and men look up gratefully as they find shelter under the mountain.
- (3) A much damaged architectural frieze with projecting and sunken panels is embedded in the wall of a private house; long years of



Fig. 75. Detail of the face of the male illustrated in Fig. 74.

Fig. 76. Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhara. Stone, about 80×70 cm. Nirmand, Kullu district. Circa sixth century A.D.







Fig. 77. Vyāla with rider. Stone, 56×37 cm. Embedded in the wall of a chamber, Ambikā temple, Nirmand, Kullu. About the seventh century.

worship have produced a thick coat of vermilion so that few details can now be made out. The panel at extreme left contains a *gana*. The second raised panel has a many-armed figure in an agitated pose, probably Mahiṣamardini, but those next to it are too deeply encrusted to be discerned. The depressed panels all have the same motif of a scroll running through the entire length. From the simple character of the frieze, the shape of the corpulent *gana*, and what can be made out of the creeper, the lintel appears to be of an early date.

- (4) A *vyāla*. In the mud wall of a room built in front of the Ambikā temple below the village of Nirmand, faint outlines of a carving were visible; when the surrounding area was cleared by the villagers, in May 1984, a beautiful early *vyāla* sculpture, 56×37 cm., complete with a rider and a warrior, came to view (Fig. 77). The animal, which has a

lion's head and a horse's body, rears up on his hind legs and arches its long neck; a prostrate warrior struggles underneath, grasping the animal's long tail; a plump *gana* dances on the monster's back, unmindful of his belligerence.

- (5) A pillar whose shaft is octagonal below and sixteen-sided above, decorated with half-lotus and other vegetal bands was also recovered from the same *bhandar* and displayed in the temple compound (Fig. 78).

To what period are all these carvings to be attributed? Undoubtedly, they are far anterior to Bajaura and Jagatsukh, also in Kullu district. Some antiquities from Agroha in Harayana and Murti in the Salt Range, in Pakistan, have been recognised as being of the late Gupta style. We may consider the sculpture of Nirmand in relation with this and other early art of north India.

In the last quarter of the fifth century, the Gupta dynasty of Magadha finally collapsed, to be replaced by its former feudatories or by new adventurers. The sculptural style that had been evolving during one hundred and fifty years of the imperial period, however, was carried on by the sculpture created under the successor dynasties until about the seventh century, when provincial idioms began to form. The sculpture of Nirmand should be placed in this twilight period. The architectural activity recorded in Samudrasena's Nirmand copper-plate provides a convenient backdrop; while all the pieces may not be of one and the same date, yet as a whole they may be ascribed to the late sixth and the seventh centuries of the Christian era — precisely the same period chronicled in the copper-plate. On the one hand, some motifs which were especially favoured during the Gupta age (Govardhanadhara) are met with in Nirmand, while on the other hand, the first beginnings of a regional style, that will be seen in later monuments such as at Bajaura, can already be discerned (tubular limbs, slight ripples or rolls of flesh, crepe-like scarves).

The theme of Kṛṣṇa lifting up the Govardhana mountain was a favourite subject in the fifth-sixth century art all over northern India — Rangmahal, Mandor, Mathura and Allahabad, and now the Nirmand panel must also be counted with



Fig. 78. Pillar. Preserved in the Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand. About seventh century.

this group. The Mandor and Rangmahal panels (J. Williams, *The Art of Gupta India*, Pl. 55, and *Lalit Kala* 8, Pl. XXI, Fig. 1 respectively), which are the earliest of all, faithfully reproduce the pastoral setting of Vraja; the Mathura panel (Williams, Pl. 227) with its orderly composition already contrasts with these: the mountain is represented by a rectangular block and its peaks by regular triangles etched on its front; the cows stand on either side of Kṛṣṇa, one above the other on their individual pedestals, all facing out; on Kṛṣṇa's right and left stand two cowherds, each small figure an exact counterpart of the other. On our Nirmand panel, the people are herded together with the cattle on one side under the overbearing mountain which

extends from one extreme to the other, all eagerly looking up to Kṛṣṇa in an attitude which is visually more satisfying than the hieratic composition preferred at Mathura, yet the otherwise stark background lacks the variety and interest of the earlier panels of Rangmahal and Mandor. Kṛṣṇa's stance, supporting the mountain on his uplifted arm, is basically the same in all the carvings of this story, but in Nirmand the figures of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma have become slender when compared to earlier Gupta panels. The slight ripples of skin on the chest and arms, together with the top-knot of hair

Fig. 79. Durgā Mahiṣamardini. Jagatsukh, Kullu. Stone, height about 1 metre. Circa ninth century. A small shrine of Gaurī-Saṅkara of the ninth century and another much-renovated temple of Sandhyā or Gāyatrīdevī indicate that in ancient times a larger temple may have stood here, of which this Durgā is a solitary remain. It is now kept in the State Museum, Simla.





Fig. 80. Dancing Gaṇeśa. Sūrya temple, Nirath, Simla district. Stone, height about 1.40 metre. Circa tenth century. Based on a Pratihāra model, this Gaṇeśa shows local elements in the form of a lotus and a long-stemmed receptacle in his hands. While his stout body is typical, his rather thin head would later develop into a folk style. The garland of bells is reminiscent of Gaṇeśa's distant yakṣa prototype.

(features which the male figure with an attendant described earlier also shares) show that a local idiom is crystallising here.

The *vyāla* is a recurrent motif, which decorated a temple's basement mouldings, door-jambs, brackets and, in medieval temples, wall recesses, usually grouped in pairs, either facing each other or facing away from each other; our *vyāla* was the right side member of one pair, whose complementary piece from the left may probably still lie buried somewhere in Nirmand. It cannot fail to remind us of other Gupta *vyālas* — from Sarnath, of the fifth century, or, still nearer, from Agroha in Haryana, which is only 300 kms. south of Simla, and thus quite close to Nirmand as well (D. R. Sahni, *Catalogue of the Museum of Archaeology at Sarnath*,



Fig. 81. Viṣṇu. Stone, height more than 1 metre. Loose sculpture in the wooden temple at Kigas, Mandi district. Late tenth century. Kigas is only about twenty-five kilometres south-west from Bajaura. This Viṣṇu can be compared with the Viṣṇu and other sculptures of the Viśveśvara temple there (Figs. 31-32), but the Chamba-Kashmiri influence of Bajaura has weakened. A stone temple must have stood at this spot which is now marked by a much later wooden shrine of the seventeenth-eighteenth century.

Pl. XXII). The warrior trampled under our *vyāla*'s feet is much eroded, but the object which he seems to grasp with one hand may well be the long tail of the animal, as in one of the Sarnath sculptures. While in the countless other carvings of this popular motif a warrior is shown riding the hybrid, here it is a dancing *gana*, generally similar to the post-Gupta *gaṇas* of Nachna of the sixth century (K. D. Bajpai in *Lalit Kala* 10, Pls. XIII-XIV).

The *vyāla* sculpture is a large piece, but it is carved from one block, and may have served as a bracket over a doorway, or adorned a staircase, as did the several Sarnath leogryph (Sahni, pp.199-200). The stark profile of the animal and the blank



interspaces between the *gaṇa*, the *vyāla* and the prone warrior create the pleasing appearance of a stencil-patterned window. Mrs. Williams comments (*Art of Gupta India*, p. 145) about the leogryph from Agroha, that its decor is indistinguishable from that of Sarnath and that the style is orthodox Gupta; perhaps it would not be wrong to make the same remarks about the Nirmand *vyāla*.

### THE WOODEN SCULPTURES OF GAJAN

The National Highway leading from Kullu to Manali 45 km. away to the north, proceeds upstream along the right bank of the Beas river. At the small village of Patlikuhl about half way between Kullu and Manali, another road branches to the right, to cross the river and approach Manali along the left bank, touching Naggar and Jagat-sukh, both of which served as capitals of the Kullu-Sultanpur state at different periods. This Left Bank Road, as it is called, is charming in the extreme. The Beas itself is not visible, yet its fertility is evident everywhere. Orchards of apples, plums and cherries stretch on either side, and from the snowy peaks on the east run countless streams. At a village called Karjan, about ten kilometres from Patlikuhl, a narrow path leads to the village of Gajan. Here, in a small shrine (Fig. 83) of the local goddesses Dochā-Mochā are housed six wooden carvings, which were first brought to light in 1981 (Mrs. Helène Diserens, "Six Unpublished Anthropomorphic Wooden Sculptures at Gazan (Kullu)", *Central Asiatic Journal* XXV (1981), pp. 163-173).

Fig. 83. The small wooden shrine of the twin goddess Docā-Mocā, Gajan, Kullu district. The six early wooden sculptures described here are preserved in this shrine.

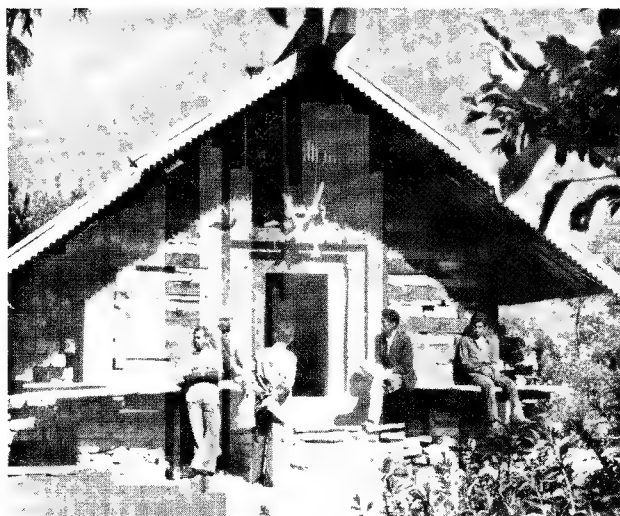


Fig. 82. *Mātṛkā Kaumārī*. Stone. "Yoginisthan", Kullu. About tenth century A.D. A group of three *Mātṛkās*, *Kaumārī*, *Brahmāṇī* and *Vārāhī*, and a *Vīrabhadra*, were recovered from the river Beas near Bajaura, and are now kept under a tree on the bank. The sadhu looking after them informed us that some more sculptures were lying half-submerged.

Two male figures can be set apart for they seem to have been cult images, the four others are all female which fulfilled an architectural function. Three or four fragmentary door-jambs and lintels are also preserved in the same shrine, but they are as late as the fourteenth century, and are not discussed here.

- (1) Male deity, probably *Sūrya* (Fig. 84). This sculpture, carved in the round, has suffered much weathering. It must have had only two arms, but now they are broken; the lower parts of both the legs have also withered, the sculpture measuring 1.29 m in its present mutilated condition. From the presence of a halo it is clear that the figure is of some divinity, in all likelihood of the Sun



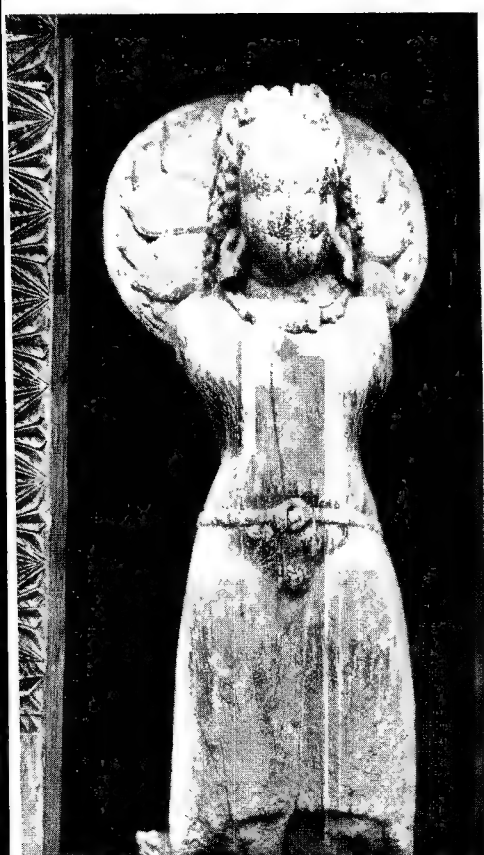


Fig. 84. *Sūrya*. Wood, height 1.29 metres. Docā-Mocā temple, Gajan, Kullu district. Circa seventh century. (Courtesy ASI.)



Fig. 85. *Daṇḍi?* Wood, height 1.20 metre. Docā-Mocā temple, Gajan, Kullu district. Circa seventh century. (Courtesy ASI.)



Fig. 87. *Female figure with a child*. Wood, height 1.91 metre. Docā-Mocā temple, Gajan, Kullu district. Circa seventh century. (Courtesy ASI.)

Fig. 86. Detail of 85.



god, as will be evident from the following description.

The deity wears a long tunic, which flares out on either side all the way down from the waist, though above the waist the form of the tunic cannot be discerned. A belt with a circular buckle or ring in the centre and the two ends of a cord hanging down on either side secures the garment at the waist. The face is large and full, but only the barest outlines of the eyes, a shapely nose and smiling lips can now be perceived. Heavy *kuṇḍalas*, a necklace of pearls and a flat-topped royal *kirīṭa* crown, with the decoration of a *trikaṇṭaka* and floral bosses adorn the deity. Tight ringlets of hair cascade down the neck; behind the head and shoulders is a large halo relieved with a full blown lotus.



Fig. 88. Female figure. Wood, height 1.48 metre. Docā-Mocā temple, Gajan, Kullu district. Circa seventh century. (Courtesy ASI.)



Fig. 89. Female figure. Wood, height 1.50 metre. Docā-Mocā temple, Gajan, Kullu district. Circa seventh century. (Courtesy ASI.)



Fig. 90. Female figure. Wood, height 1.53 metre. Docā-Mocā temple, Gajan, Kullu district. Circa seventh century. (Courtesy ASI.)

Though the sculpture is greatly damaged, its first impression on the viewer is that it is of Sūrya. The long tunic and the waist-band which resembles an *avyāṅga* are both exclusive to solar deities. Besides, the *kirīṭa-mukuta* is the especial crown of those deities who are invested with some form of sovereign power, such as Viṣṇu, Indra and Sūrya; Sūrya, the sovereign of the sky, wears only this particular type of crown, as does our present figure.

Besides these explicit attributes, other conventions, such as the frontal, upright bearing of the personage, and his stark, flattened form, as though it were not a carving in the round — reinforce the impression; for these, precisely, are the means by which sculptors always conveyed the idea of the great distance that separates the solar

disc from the earth; and the peculiar, “face-on” aspect that the sun always presents to view. Mrs. Diserens also proposed the same identification.

- (2) Male figure, height 1.20 metres, shoulder width 32 cm (Figs. 85, 86). This sculpture represents a portly male, who stands on a plain square pedestal with his legs parted a little as though the better to support his bulk; he probably wears long boots. The upper arms were separately carved and fitted into sockets at the shoulders as in the Sūrya figure, for we can see the sutures, now loosened because of age. Both his arms are broken at the elbows and the mortice holes at the ends of the upper arms where the separately carved lower arm would have been fitted, are visible. We can surmise that the hands were free of the body and were

probably extended in the gestures of *abhaya* and *varada*, for no knobs are attached to the thighs where the hands would have rested if they had reached down, and also because the thighs are perfectly rounded off and are as well finished as the rest of the body. The figure wears only a lower garment which falls in two parts, in front and behind, but is not gathered in between the legs like a *dhoti*; probably it represents an animal skin which would be the proper adornment of an ascetic. The chest is bare, a short necklace and a string with a large locket are worn on the neck, and circular rings in the ears. The long hair is arranged in ringlets; when viewed from front, as in Figure 85, the appearance of an oval halo is created, but a side view (Fig. 86) shows the hair-style to advantage. At the top of the head a knot or bulge is formed and concealed under the hair like the *uṣṇīṣa* of a Buddhist deity. The features of the face are too worn for description, but the cast of the head and shoulders, especially when viewed from the side, cannot fail to remind one of some Gupta and post-Gupta sculptures.

In the absence of both the hands, a precise identification of the figure is not possible. Not only does he stand on a high pedestal, he also has the poise of a divinity or some other exalted personage. His corpulence, his knotted hair and the lower garment may make one think of Brahmā, but the presence of only one head and two hands goes against this suggestion. Kubera, the portly god of wealth, is another who comes to mind. However, we can see that both the male sculptures are related to each other by their style and dimensions; and we have also supposed the first one to be of Sūrya. In that case, our present sculpture may be Sūrya's attendant Daṇḍi, as Mrs. Diserens has also conjectured, especially, if his feet are really shod in tall boots. But we must remember that *ṛṣis* like Jamadagni, Manu and Parāśara are still worshipped in countless village shrines in Himachal, and it is quite likely that the sculpture that we have been considering represents one such venerable sage.

The remaining four wood carvings may

be said to stand apart from the two male deities, for all four are female, probably *yakṣīs*, and they are carved against pillars or door-jambs, thus making them, in all likelihood, part of the architectural decoration of the same temple which enshrined our Sūrya.

- (3) Woman with a child (Fig. 87) (total height 1.91 m.). Her figure is carved in relief against a plain post. She stands in a relaxed position under a flowering tree, her legs crossed at the ankles. Her bodice or tunic fits her form closely, as we often see in Kashmirian sculptures (D. Mitra, *Pandretban, Avantipur and Martand*, Pl. II). A long scarf or sheet covers her head, its ends falling down on either side of her feet. She holds a child on her waist, caressing his hair with her left hand and his chin with the right hand.
- (4) The female in Figure 88 (total height 1.48 m.), stands under a flowering tree; her right leg is planted on the ground, the left crosses it behind, making for a slight leftward profile. She wears a tunic, and a skirt with parallel transverse lines reaches down to her ankles, below which the sculpture is broken; a long thin scarf is thrown over her shoulders. Her right hand hangs by her side, and the left, bent at the elbow, carried some object which is now largely obliterated. A large lotus flower forms the backdrop to her head. The wood has crumbled to a great extent and deep cracks have developed especially on the upper parts. The shoulders are rather disproportionate; if the bosom was curvaceous, it is now bereft of all traces because of the severe weathering. This carving (as do the three other females) suggests a provincial style.
- (5) Female figure (Fig. 89) (total height 1.50 m.). She also stands under a flowering tree, on a square pedestal, slightly turning to her left. With both hands she supports a large lotus flower, or a disc relieved with lotus flower design, the significance of which is not clear. Her hair is gathered in a bun, she wears large earrings, a skirt reaching down to her ankles and a long scarf on her shoulders, with the two ends wrapped around the arms, while her body appears to be bare above the waist. Parallel slanting lines on

her skirt (as on that of the preceding figure) remind us of the similar fabric of the female figure from Murti (Williams, Pl. 225), and of Gaṅgā-Yamunā flanking the doorway of the Viśveśvara temple at Bajaura (Fig. 30). Decoration behind her head seems to be the visible half of a lotus motif similar to that behind the head of the preceding female. The front of the pedestal is carved with an atlantis or *kīcaka* who is as if supporting the Yakṣī above him — an unexpected motif here, reminding us of the figures on the much earlier railing pillars of Bharhut and Mathura.

- (6) This Yakṣī (Fig. 90) on a pedestal under a tree is carved on a pillar which measures 1.53 m. She crosses her left leg against the right and presents a slight profile. She wears a scarf which passes under her arms, a thick girdle, anklets and large earrings; and a lotus "halo" similar to the other carvings described above also adorns her head; her arms are partly broken. A *kīcaka* is carved on the pedestal; his figure is rather ungainly, for above the waist he is shown in frontal view, his arms raised up and bearing the weight of the Yakṣī, while below, his body is in profile, in a kneeling, or flying, posture.

Mrs. Diserens proposed two periods for the six sculptures of Gajan. She compared the two male deities with a Sūrya from Hat (Bajaura) and a wooden pillar from Katarmal in Kumaon, and dated the two Gajan male figures to the ninth century, and the four females to the tenth-twelfth centuries.

While a brief interval may or may not have separated the two deities from the four other carvings, yet the visual impact from the overall dimensions and the condition of the wood is that all the six belong to a single chronological period. The Gajan sculptures are much earlier than the ninth century, very likely the seventh. In Kullu and other nearby areas no wooden sculptures of comparable date are preserved; the only other early wooden carvings are from Bharmaur and Chhatradi in Chamba, but they form a separate style related to Kashmir, while the sculpture of Gajan is generally in the style of the Indian plains, though with local flavour. Let

alone wood, even stone sculptures with which those of Gajan may be compared are sparse: a solitary Mahiṣamardini of the eighth-ninth century from Jagatsukh illustrated in Fig. 79, the images in the Śiva temple at Bajaura (Figs. 29-32), and the sculpture of Nirmand that we have considered above. But Bajaura and Jagatsukh are both medieval, and the wood carvings of Gajan must pre-date them. The simplicity of form, especially of the two male deities, the type of crown of one, and the ringlet hair of both, evoke the earlier art of Gupta times, as does the tunic falling to the knees. The four females evoke still more ancient iconography, for *Yakṣīs* with supporting atlantes were the regular decorative motifs of early Buddhist *stūpas* of Bharhut and Mathura. The Gajan females were part of the architecture of a temple; it is possible that two of them, with complementary profiles, may have stood on either side of a doorway, as at Bajaura. The female on the door-jamb from Murti, who stands on a jar, also very likely represents a river goddess. At least one Gajan female, our No. 4, seems to hold a jar in her uplifted hand. The skirts of our females have the same linear patterns that decorate the much better preserved Gaṅgā-Yamunā of Bajaura, and their scarves fluttering on either side are also similarly represented. At Bajaura, the semi-divine nature of the rivers is indicated by the lotus *chattra* held over their heads, an element that may explain the presence of what look like lotus haloes behind the heads of the females at Gajan.

But the wood carvings are much earlier than Bajaura. The twin goddesses of Bajaura positively exemplify medieval tendencies: a hieratic conception with diminutive attendants, elaborate double lotus pedestals and an abundance of foliage. The carvings of Gajan, by comparison, are archaic, with ponderous forms, apart from the ancient iconography of *kīcaka* bases. However, like Nirmand, here too we can see the beginnings of a provincial style — an early medieval feature, particularly in the way the shawls are wrapped around their figures.

#### THE BRASSES FROM CHHATRADEI

While other metal images from Himachal are being discussed elsewhere in this book, it would not be out of place to consider here a group of brasses kept in the custody of the Archaeological Survey



of India in the Śaktidevī temple at Chhatradi. Altogether, they number thirty, including the large principal icon of Śaktidevī and a few others in the style of Chamba; in addition to these, there are some smaller votive figurines of tutelary deities like Annapūrṇā, from the far south and from Orissa. We shall exclude these latter, and discuss only seven brasses of local manufacture but of different dates from the ninth to about the twelfth century, which enable us to establish a local style. They remain unnoticed by the few visitors to Chhatradi, overshadowed as they are by the large Śakti icon;

Fig. 91. Śaiva bust, installed in the Śaktidevī temple, Chhatradi. Brass, height 48 cm. Circa 750 A.D.

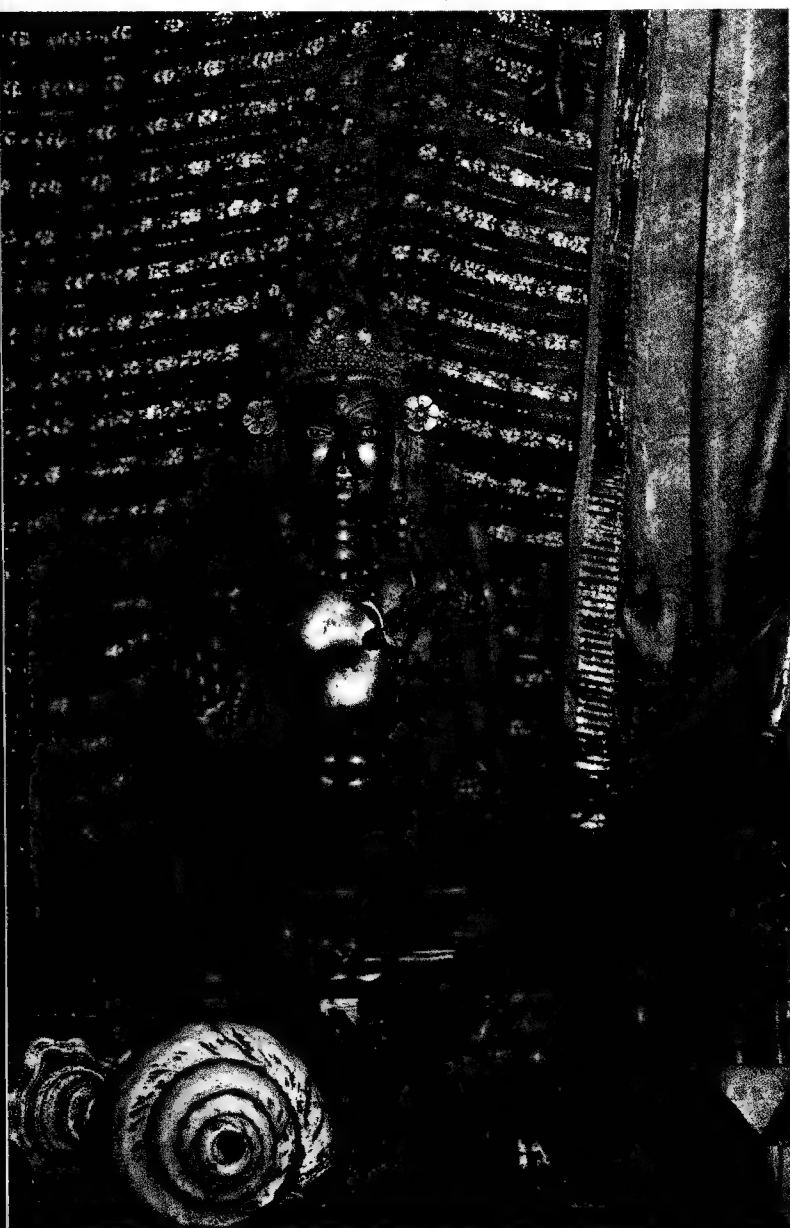


Fig. 94. Tārā, profile.

besides, they are usually dressed in stiff silken garments which conceal their antiquity, and the priests uncover them only after much persuasion.

- (1) Śaiva bust (Fig. 91); height 48 cm. A male bust, cast against a *liṅga* installed in its *pīṭha*, occupies one corner of the Śaktidevī sanctum. It has two arms, the right hand holding a rosary in the action of counting the beads, the left holding a *mātuluṅga* on a vessel with a long tapering base, typical of Himachal. The hair is matted on top of the head, from which thick strands fall to the shoulders; a trifoliate diadem also decorates the head revealing the hairline above the forehead. Two large flowers above the ears, large earrings, an *ekāvalī* necklace, arm-bands, an *upavīta* in the form of a snake, and a *dhotī* adorn the person. The eyes are inlaid with electrum; the third eye in the forehead was set with a precious stone.

If the Śaktidevī brass with its slightly stiff *bhaṅga* appears to be a provincial produc-



tion, this smaller bust represents an authoritative imperial style—that of Kashmir, as it was practised in Chamba. Its masculine, V-shaped torso with slightly defined chest muscles, narrow waist, a slight fold on the stomach with a deep “cross” navel, and a large square face, suggest that it may have been cast around 750 A.D., when Lalitāditya Mukatāpīḍa of the Kārkoṭa dynasty of Kashmir, presumably, extended his empire eastward to Chamba (and even beyond).

Other similar busts are known—see Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir* Pl. 5. A perusal of north-western texts such as the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* and the *Nilamatapurāṇa*, to locate iconographic prescriptions, was

Fig. 92. Two female figures in the Śaktidevī temple, Chhatradi. Circa ninth century.



Fig. 93. Tārā, in the Śaktidevī temple at Chhatradi. Brass, height 48 cm. Ninth century. The trident is a later invention. Presence of Tārā may indicate that a Buddhist temple stood here.

not successful.

The bust is permanently fixed in the rear right corner of the Śaktidevī sanctum, but this cannot be its original position. It is very unlikely that this bust was a secondary image or a simple votive object like the other brasses in Chhatradi, as its present location suggests; probably it was the principal cult object, housed in an independent shrine of its own, of which no trace now remains.

- (2) A pair of brasses, of rather large size, of females are always kept on the proper right of Śaktidevī in the sanctum (Figs. 92-95). They are both plump and short statured, and appear to be of the same date; they are not cast in the round, for the backs of both are flattish and rough, suggesting that the

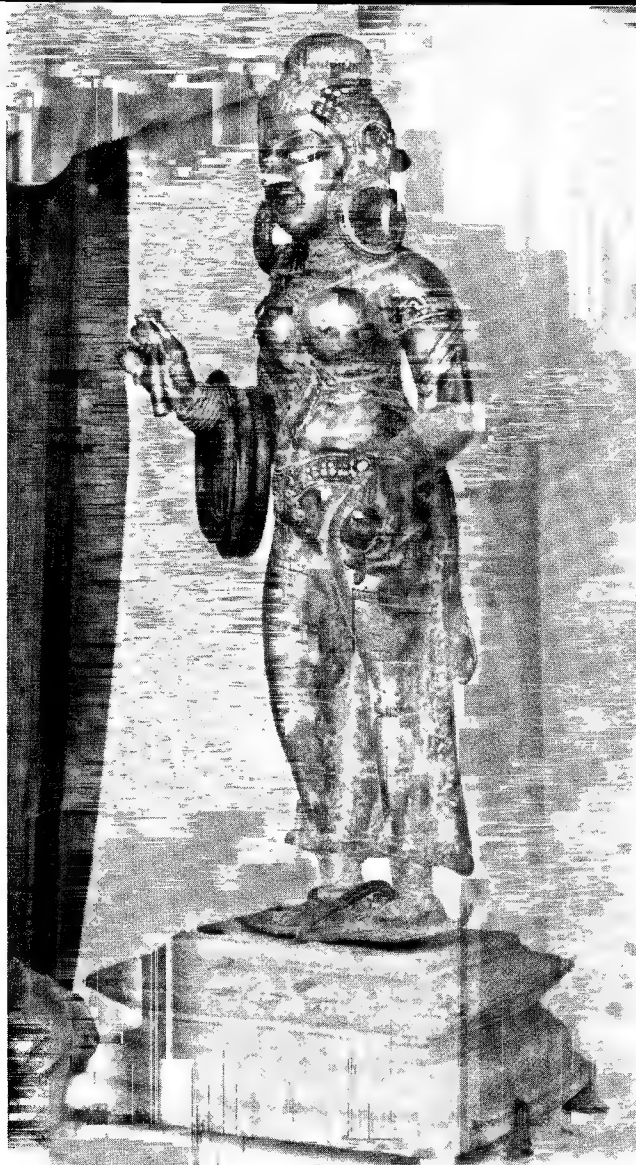


Fig. 95. Female figure in the Śaktidevī temple, Chhatradi. Brass, height about 52 cm. Ninth century. The pedestal may not be original to the image.

brasses were to stand against a wall.

The figure described here first (Figs. 93-94, height 48 cm) stands in *tribhāṅga* on its own square pedestal. It holds a fully open lotus flower in the right hand and a small fruit in the left. From this it appears to represent a Tārā, but no remains of a Buddhist shrine are known in Chhatradi. The long trident inserted in the right hand is a later addition. Her hair is tied in a large coil above her head; she wears a diadem and other ornaments, a richly patterned transparent skirt and a scarf; the eyes are inlaid with electrum. A date in the second half of the ninth century can be attributed; although

the workmanship is local, the influence of an imperial ninth century Kashmir-Chamba style is clearly perceptible in the bloated face and the eyes.

- (3) This second female figure, about 52 cm high, stands with a slight bend in her body (Fig. 95). The figure is full and rather stout; the right hand holds the stem of some object, the left a small fruit. The hair is tied in a round bun over her head; plain large earrings, a necklace, arm-bands, a waist girdle, a scarf over her shoulders and a transparent fine skirt adorn her person. Long electrum-plated eyes, and a large round face indicate a style affected by the Utpala art of Kashmir, that is, after 853 A.D.

From Fig. 95 it can be seen that the brass does not perfectly fit its pedestal but is secured to it with a pin. If the present pedestal belonged to some other brass, then that im-

Fig. 96. Assemblage of stone sculptures outside the Śaktidevī temple, Chhatradi.



age is not forthcoming. The two large rings around the arm are later offerings.

As we saw above, the Śaiva bust does not seem to belong to the insignificant corner of the sanctum which it has come to occupy. Similarly, these two female figures, in all likelihood were intended to be placed against a wall, probably flanking some central deity. There is clear evidence of haphazard activity, both within and outside the sanctum, with metal and stone sculptures of different periods simply piled together (Fig. 96). We believe that more shrines must have existed around the temple of Śaktidevī, (see Fig. 97) including one of a Buddhist affiliation.

- (4) Mahiṣamardini (height 20 cm., Fig. 98), Eight-armed Mahiṣamardini stands on a

Fig. 97. A large Gaurī-Śaṅkara stone installed in a later shrine by the side of the Śaktidevī temple. Circa tenth century. This indicates sculptural activity stretching over a fairly long period.



Fig. 98. Mahiṣamardini and Umā-Maheśvara in the Śaktidevī sanctum, Chhatradi. Circa ninth and tenth centuries, respectively.

moulded pedestal. Her left leg is extended to the left, and planted on the head of the buffalo lying prone, while with the right foot she pins down the hind-quarters of the animal. Her right hands hold, in *pradakṣiṇā* order, a sword, an arrow, a spear thrust into the demon-animal, and a thin ribbed mace which is raised up behind her head. The left hands, from top to bottom, hold first an unclear object, a conch, a bow and the hair of the human form of the demon. She wears a diadem with three crests, her loose hair spreading over her back (see rear view, Fig. 99) and a *vaijayantimālā*. Folds of the skin, which are the conventional marks of beauty, can be seen under the breasts. If the navel was deep-set, it has now become smooth. Indeed, the brass is smooth all over because of centuries of worshipful handling, and there is a deep patina all over its surface.

The thickset demon in human form who springs out from the dead buffalo is about to be beheaded by the sword held in the goddess' right hand, a departure from the canon of Mahiṣamardini images, in which the demon assumes human form only after his body is decapitated. A comparable brass has



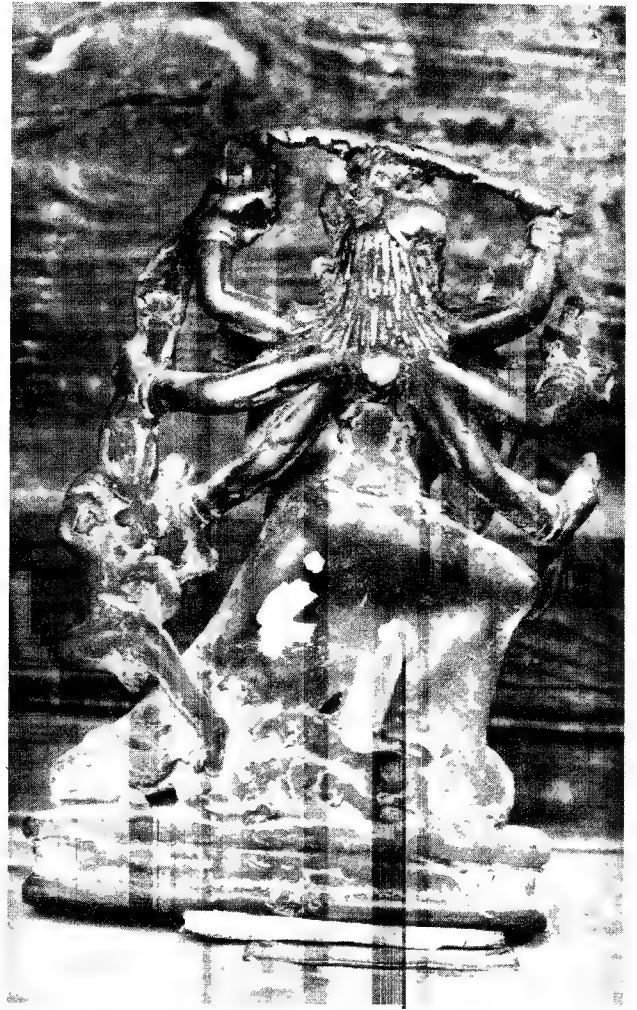


Fig. 99. *Mahiṣamardini*, reverse.

Fig. 100. *Gaṇeśa*, *Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī* and *Mahiṣamardini* in the sanctum of the Śakti temple, Chhatradi. The *Gaṇeśa* may date to circa eleventh century and hail from Nirmand; *Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī* are later, of about the twelfth century.



been illustrated in Neven's *New Studies into Indian and Himalayan Sculpture*, Fig. 38 and p. 23, but the goddess of our brass has a more forceful presence. Though both are without a frame, in our image the violent movement of the eight arms is expressed more successfully, unconfined as the figure is by any surrounding frame. It is worth noting that while most other brasses at Chhatradi have pedestals together with spouts, and pilared frames (which at once assimilate even a small icon to a shrine or a shrine niche), our Durgā is without a spout or frame. In comparison with the other illustrated Durgā, a date of the ninth century can be mentioned for the present Mahiṣamardini.

- (5) Umā-Maheśvara (height about 16 cm., Fig. 98). This image is much worn out because of years of worship, in addition a thick encrustation has formed all over, further obliterating surface details. Śiva is seated in *yogāsana* on a circular stool placed over a lotus, this in turn resting on a high moulded pedestal provided with a spout, all cast in one piece. Śiva's posture is rigid, the legs crossed at the ankles, the knees half raised in a sharp angle. The objects in his four hands are not clear, but a snake may be seen in the left upper hand. Śiva wears an *upavīta*, matted hair and also a trifoliate crown. Umā sits precariously in his lap; the head of Nandi is visible behind on the right of Śiva.

Such metal images with nimbuses similar to the present instance are customarily being attributed to Kashmir. However, the concept of Kashmiri style has to be revised, to include neighbouring provinces, as argued elsewhere. The presence of a hoard of similar images at Chhatradi itself lends force to the suggestion that the present Umā-Maheśvara may be of a local manufacture, of circa tenth century.

- (6) Gaṇeśa (height 16 cm., Fig. 100). Four-armed Gaṇeśa is seated in *lalitāsana*, his mount, a mouse, peeping out from one corner. His four hands show probably the *abhaya* gesture, a rosary, a *paraśu* and a bowl of sweets. The lotus nimbus has sharply pointed petals. His moulded pedestal is provided with a *pranāla*, and the back slab is complete with cross-bars. On a comparison

of all elements of decoration with brasses from Nirmand, the eleventh century is suggested as the date of this Gaṇeśa; and it is even possible that the brass was made in the Nirmand area.

- (7) Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī seated on Garuḍa (height 28 cm., Fig. 100). Several metal and stone representations of Viṣṇu (either alone or with his consort Lakṣmī), often as Caturānana, with the three additional faces of a lion, a boar and an angry man, are known from Chamba and Kashmir, to which provinces this type may be endemic.

The image in the Śaktidevī temple collection is quite large, being 28 cm. tall. Viṣṇu is seated astride his mount Garuḍa, with his consort on his lap, but his attributes are largely effaced. He wears a local variation of the *kirita* crown with four tall flanks. Garuḍa has the chest, head and arms of a man, and a bird's feathers. His wings spread out into an arch, the tips resting on the ground; the tail feathers are divided into two parts, one bunch turned up like a rudder, the other resting on the ground, to support the weight. Numerous examples exist of this arrangement. In his proffered hands he holds a jar, presumably nectar.

The *prabhā* consists of a pair of fluted pillars crowned by worshipers. A double arch springs up from the top of these pillars; an ogival nimbus frames the head; the *pīṭha* is provided with a spout.

Several elements of the image's frame are inelegant, indicating a late date. The pillars are disproportionately tall when compared to the width of the brass. As a result, on the one hand they are made to slant out of the perpendicular, to accommodate the deities, and on the other hand, the double arch of the *torana* is rather compressed. The uninterrupted fluting of the pillars is unusual, also unusual are the two adoring figures on top; in more authentic earlier stone images, niches would be provided on either side, with Śiva and Brahmā (with their consorts in case the central figure of Viṣṇu is with his consort) completing the trinity. From all these elements the brass under examination has to be dated to a late period, about the twelfth-thirteenth century.



## PART TWO : BRASS ICONS





## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

**M**ETAL ICONS ARE usually cast by the lost-wax technique and may consist of three basic alloys: bronze, brass or copper. By the lost-wax technique, the icon is first either fully fashioned in wax or, to save metal if the icon is large, modelled in wax on a core of light clay which is grossly shaped in the general outline of the icon. We come across both methods in Himachal, but as the icons are rather small, the plain lost-wax technique prevails.

When complete, the wax model is covered with successive layers of clay mixed with straw to obtain a mould. When dried, the mould is heated and the molten wax evacuated through channels provided at the base of the mould, thus leaving the hollow matrix of the icon which is then filled with the molten alloy. After cooling, the mould is broken and an exact metal replica of the wax original is obtained, which is polished.

The lost-wax technique thus generally implies an unique specimen, although very frequently parts of the icon may have been separately cast in wax or imprinted in standardized moulds and then assembled. Sometimes, the wax model of a relatively simple, small and flattened icon was "edited" by way of a mould in several copies. Combining these two wax imprinting and moulding techniques from matrices obtained from an original icon is the usual

way fakers use to make copies which they sell as genuine antiques. In most cases, a trained eye can quickly detect traces of joints between the parts and such imperfections as inaccuracy in finish and polishing; more seldom, however, a fake may be taken for a genuine piece until either the original icon or another faked specimen turns up. This will be illustrated with cases encountered amongst so many others in Chapter XVIII.

As for the main alloys — bronze, brass or copper — bronze, which consists mainly of copper (80 to 95%) and tin (20 to 5%), and is either brownish or yellowish in colour, is very rarely found in Himachal where tin had to be imported. However, it could have been used very seldom in an early period (fifth to seventh century), but it is still difficult to state whether bronze icons were imported from Swat and north-eastern India or were of local workmanship. Pure copper, which is reddish or brown, is also practically never encountered.

As a rule, brass has been largely and commonly used in Himachal and is easily recognizable by its bright yellow colour, when not altered by a dark greyish green patina. It consists mainly of copper and a variable amount of zinc, which, although not intentionally added, was produced by sublimation of calamine when the copper ore was melted.

As in the case of stone and earlier wooden sculpture and architecture, metal icons of Himachal consist mainly of two stylistic varieties: one classical, mostly imported, and a later traditional or local "folk" style which evolved from the first.

The main classical sources were imported metal icons of Kashmiri, Pratihāra and Katyūri workmanship and those that were locally produced from these prototypes. As will be seen, the western part of Himachal was strongly influenced both by Swat, Kashmir and even Central Asia, being geographically, economically and politically closely related to these regions. Similarly, the eastern part shows various influences among which the Pratihāra and Katyūri styles of Uttar Pradesh predominate with a few and sporadic infiltrations of Bihar and Nepalese iconological elements. Such influences and infiltrations were the consequence of political events and circumstantial trade routes linking North India to Central Asia.

The easiest way to reach the main trade sub-route of the main Central Asiatic trunk road was of course the classical Indo-Gangetic Plain. Alternative routes had to be chosen when political circumstances (the Hūṇa invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries, the Muslim take-over in Afghanistan as early as in the middle of the seventh century and their sporadic raids in the Punjab from the eighth century onwards until their final conquest of the whole of North India in the twelfth and early thirteenth century) compromised safety, and these routes crossed the Western Himalayan ranges, going upstream the Sutlej to Western Tibet, the Beas to Ladakh and Yarkand, or the Indus from Punjab to Gilgit and Khotan.

We can reasonably assume that the classical phase must have lasted until its sources were cut off by the establishment of Islamic rule in North India in the early thirteenth century, which resulted in a sizeable final import of small metal Hindu icons by Hindu refugees as was the case with north-east Indian Buddhist bronzes imported into South Tibet.

Thereafter, local need for cult objects and icons could only be satisfied by local casters who, after a period that is still pure conjecture, started to deviate from the classical prototypes, thus producing

local styles of their own which progressed into what we call "folk bronzes". If this is correct, we may use as a criterion of relative chronology the degree or extent of morphological and epiphenomenological deviation a folk icon displays in relation to its classical prototypes, so that the greater the deviation, the more it is admittedly recent in terms of relative chronology.

As for establishing the provenance of both classical and post-classical or folk metal icons and grouping them into local stylistic groups, the only reliable method, although very frail, consists in statistically checking the spots where the largest number of bronzes of a specific group are to be found while altogether displaying morphological concordance with local stone and wooden sculptures. This may lead to a relative certitude in some cases such as the brasses assigned respectively to Chamba and Nirmand (Upper Sutlej) which are both technically and stylistically well differentiated and still well represented in their original homeland. One has, nevertheless, to bear in mind that brasses are extremely mobile, the bust of Śujunidevī (Fig. 169) is a striking example of this mobility as it was made in Chamba, the westernmost part of Himachal, and ultimately reached Nirmand, at the eastern extremity. This gives a valuable status to stone sculptures, which are in most cases immovable or at least a rather cumbersome burden to transport along mountain paths, and hence provide us with reliable material for comparison with metal icons, as is obviously the case with the somewhat subtle differentiation between the Nirmand and Nirath sub-groups of the Middle Sutlej group of folk brasses in the early folk phase.

Ritual instruments or parts thereof such as altar lamps and bell handles also provide us with valuable comparative elements to help us guess the provenance of metal icons with which they share common features. These are practically as numerous as the shrines, and, although they are easily transportable, infiltrations can be detected as, for example, a bell handle seen in Kullu topped by a lion which exhibits morphological features that are exclusively specific to Chamba (Fig. 101 to compare with Fig. 102).

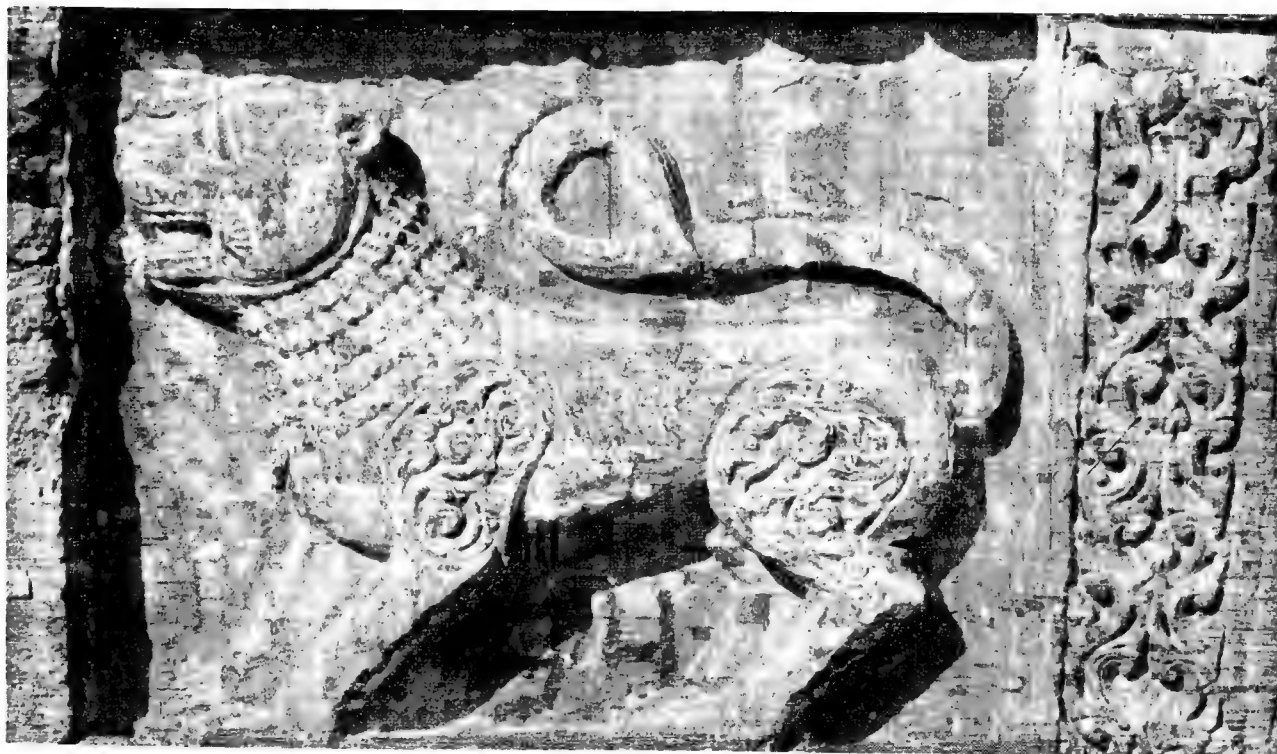
Notwithstanding the methodological steps de-

scribed above, it must be emphasized that this study is just an initial attempt at a stylistic classification of some groups of brass icons from Himachal. Its approximations make it in no way exhaustive or conclusive and many gaps remain to be filled, too many questions are unanswered; our aim is to provide some possible clues for further investigations.



101. Lion topping a bell handle of the Bijli Mahādeva ratha in Kullu.

Fig. 102. Lion on wall of maṇḍapa facing the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple, Chamba (eastern wall of building).







*Akṣobhya-Vajrasattva and his Prajñā Māmākī on four elephants. Brass. Late ninth century.*

## CHAPTER II

### A — THE WESTERN GROUP (RAVI & CHENAB)

#### INTRODUCTION

THE WESTERN GROUP of metal sculpture that we shall discuss here is territorially limited to the Upper Ravi; that is the valley of Chamba between Chamba and Bharmaur, with occasional extensions into the Upper Chenab valley (Lahaul), northern Punjab and the valleys of Kangra and Kullu. However, Chamba cannot be isolated from its own cultural environment which extended far wider.

We can agree only reluctantly with the present geographical integration of Chamba within Himachal Pradesh as so many cultural features link this valley to Kashmir and even further north into Central Asia. It would even seem that the cultural concept of Kashmir extends far beyond the geographical and political boundaries of present-day Kashmir.

Nowadays, when we think of Kashmir or of the bronzes of Kashmir, we restrict the term to the immediate neighbourhood of Srinagar, that is, that strip of land enclosed between the southern Pir Panjal Range and the Greater Western Himalayan Range on its northern border. But for a few exceptions, here we meet a steady Hindu tradition from the sixth century onwards and we even know of periods in the ninth and tenth century when Buddhism was persecuted, a fact which does not concur with the production of such a large number

of Buddhist bronzes hitherto labelled as "Kashmiri" and dated to the ninth and tenth century. Although Central Asiatic and Iranian features are many, both in the few surviving monuments and in the sculptures that can with a fairly good amount of certainty be attributed to the Srinagar area, the main cultural and stylistic trend remains definitely Indian in character.

Early Tibetan chronicles often refer to Kha. che from where many artists and ideas were imported into Tibet and more particularly Western Tibet. Presently, Kha. che means Kashmir as, also, a Muslim trader of Kashmiri origin settled in Tibet. This is the sense given by S. C. Das in his dictionary. However, it must be pointed out that this is the *modern* sense and we may doubt whether Kha. che was always used in this modern and restrictive sense as this conflicts with many historical observations.

It seems that indeed Kha. che underwent some semantic evolution just as another word alluding to foreigners: Brahm. ze. Brahm. ze has two senses: a narrow one (Brahmā himself or an Indian Brahman) and a large or deductive one. In this last case Brahm. ze alludes to an Aryan or a noble and, by inference, any adept of Indian Buddhism with no more exclusive emphasis on his geographical provenance. So that when a chronicle states that

such or such image was cast by an artist who was said to be a Brahmin, one has to be cautious not to infer *a priori* that he was an Indian Brahmin as many writers do. Indeed the artist could as well have been an Indian as an orthodox Tibetan monk assimilated to the spiritual status of an Aryan or higher class Indian and bearing consequently a Sanskrit monkish name.

The same with Kha. che. It is not because in modern times Kha. che refers to Kashmir that it has always been so, even if in the strict sense Kha. che overlaps with Kashmir. When artistic influences of Kha. che are referred to in early Western Tibetan monasteries, one stumbles over the fact that many of the stylistical features are related with a cultural sphere that was definitely not specific to Kashmir but well to an area north of Kashmir (Gilgit, Skardu) and most probably included in the geographical concept of Kha. che. We know that in earlier times, kings of Turki origin such as the Paṭola in the ninth century, ruled over those areas of which the Buddhist artistic tradition seems now to have had a more considerable impact over Tibet than that of Kashmir, which was more specifically Hindu.

Hence, we feel that Kha. che could have referred to these Turki "outsiders" rather than to Kashmir understood in the strict sense of this geographical name restricted to our modern concept of Kashmir. A clue to this interpretation is given to the modern extension given by Tibetans to Kha. che, which not only refers to Kashmir but also to any Muslim coming from Kashmir and adjacent areas. Similarly, the geographical concept of Li (Khotan) was not restricted to the town of Khotan but also to the whole region adjacent to Khotan, that is to the north-west of Tibet as also Khotan semantically derived from Sanskrit Godhaniya or "Western Continent". If Kha. che may well have referred to Kashmir, most probably it has included Kashmir together with its adjacent northern Indus valley and was used as a geographical concept meaning "Western to Tibet" but not necessarily focusing on Kashmir only.

Our own investigations have brought us to the same questions as those recently put by Ulrich von Schroeder in his *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes* (pp. 107-109) when considering the prevalence of at least two distinct stylistic traditions in the metal icons attributed to Kashmir.

Besides the well-defined Hindu Kashmiri bronzes and brasses of a strongly Indianised style, many bronzes and a few ivory carvings, almost all of them Buddhist, bear strong evidence of Iranian, Turuška or Turkish and Central Asiatic patterns: names of donors related to the Turki rulers of Gilgit and Baltistan, Scythian dresses and boots, four-pointed shoulder cap, mandorla bordered with engraved flames of a distinct Chinese character, three-pointed diadem with flowing ribbons on the sides, stylized designs of rocks on the bases, high *stūpas* of the Gandharan type, a design of lotuses originating from Swat, and above all, profusely ornamental designs and such a preciousness that the mood of these icons reflects a world totally different from that of those produced in the Srinagar area.

The Buddhist bronzes and ivories share a very elaborate, refined and introverted expression, in some cases even veering towards a theatrical and overemphasized affectation reminiscent of the art of small, isolated and remote courts like that of Fondukistan or even of some principalities of the late fourteenth century northern Italy (Sienna, Pisa), as the Italian mediaeval concept of *dolcezza* would ideally correspond to such aesthetics (Fig. 103). We attribute these icons to the Gilgit area of Kashmir where small Turki Shahi kingdoms seemed to have assumed cultural and economic links between Indian Kashmir and Central Asia (Yarkand and Khotan) and to which the Buddhists eventually fled when they were persecuted in the plains of Srinagar.

From the Gilgit area (Daradadeśa), the Middle Indus runs parallel to the Swat valley, thus providing a direct cultural contact with the late and post-Gandharan Buddhist centres of Swat in the neighbourhood of Mingora and the Jambil valley.

Inversely, the upper course of the Indus links Gilgit to Ladakh from where trade routes and tracks lead southwards to Lahaul and, ultimately, to Chamba and Spiti. Tibetan chronicles, when dealing with the second spread of Buddhism that started in the late tenth century, refer to the profuse contacts of the Western Tibetan rulers of Ngari Khorsum with "Kha. che pa" monks and artists at precisely the same time when the Lohara dynasty, said initially to have been located in the

area of Gilgit, was about to replace the Utpala dynasty established in the Srinagar area. We believe that the Tibetan word for Kashmir referred in this case to the Gilgit area which remained a Buddhist stronghold with a well-defined Central Asiatic and Turkish cultural background, rather than to that of Srinagar where Buddhism was decaying or merely surviving.

To summarize, the geographical concept of Kashmir implies at least two well-defined geographical and cultural entities:

- (1) The plain of Srinagar, or South Kashmir, which was predominantly Hindu and Indian in character.
- (2) The high plateau and valleys of North Kashmir mainly centred on the Upper Indus. Buddhism was prominent here as, too, were Central Asiatic and Turkish cultural features.

We can make a further distinction between eastern and western Kashmir:

- (a) The western part, centred around Gilgit and including Dardistan and Baltistan, where Turki Shahi kings sponsored Buddhist institutions because, as in the case of the Konkan area of the Deccan under the Sātavāhana kings in the early centuries A.D., Buddhism was particularly well suited as an international trading infrastructure. We know indeed the role played in trade by Buddhist communities and monasteries settled on the main and peripheral trunks of the Silk Road where they often acted as bankers, lenders, brokers and emporium managers. Although the kings were nominally Hindus, these small kingdoms and principalities could only rely economically on such trading activities with which the Buddhists were since long well acquainted.

The link in this area, between Swat and Afghanistan including Fondukistan on the one hand and Central Asia and China on the other, was well-established since from Gilgit a trade route (the Marco Polo trail) went up through the Hunza river to Yarkand, Khotan, the Tarim, Turfan and China through the Khunjerab pass (4,700 m.) between the Pamir and the Karakoram ranges.

Trade with Central Asia was re-

established by the Sassanians and by the Turki Shahis after the Hūṇas were driven out in the middle of the sixth century, but it must have dwindled increasingly from the early tenth century onwards with the Islamic conquest of Western Central Asia.

- (b) The eastern part, principally the Upper Indus towards Ladakh and some of its adjacent and parallel valleys such as Zaskar, Lahaul, Spiti and, sporadically, Chamba. The Islamic conquest of Western Central Asia was certainly responsible for the downfall of the Turki Shahi kingdoms of north-western Kashmir and the shift, both towards east and south, of some of them at least, such as the advent of the Lohara dynasty in south Kashmir at the dawn of the eleventh century. By then, the north Kashmiri style of metal icons must have spread through the whole of the western part of Himachal Pradesh.

Fortunately, we have found some historical evidence supporting our view in Buddha Prakash's "Gilgit in Ancient Times" (*Journal of Tibetology* VII, 3, 1970, pp. 15-40), which allows us to incontrovertibly assign some prominent Kashmiri bronzes to north-western Kashmir and more particularly to Gilgit.

The Hatun rock inscription in the Gilgit Agency dated the year 47 of an unspecified era gives the name and title of a Mahārājādhirāja Paramēśvara Paṭoladeva Śāhi, Śrī Navasurendrādityanandideva and of his chief minister, *Mahāgajapati* of the *Gilgittasarāṅgha*, Great Lord of the Elephants and General of the Army in Gilgit. The name of this king also occurs in one of the manuscripts discovered in Gilgit, in which it is given as Śāhānuṣāhi Paṭolaśāhi along with that of his queen Anaṅgadevī. No doubt he must have been a devout Buddhist, for he commanded the manuscript, the *Mahāmāyūrī*, to be copied for his welfare.

Two more names of kings appear in other Gilgit manuscripts: one is Śrīdevaśāhi Surendravikramādityananda and the other Paṭoladeva Śāhi Vajrādityanandi. Chinese chronicles identify Paṭola with Baltistan, of which Gilgitta or Gilgit was a part. But it is not clear whether this Surendrāditya was the same as suggested by Buddha Prakash: Indeed





Fig. 103. Śākyamuni bestowing wealth on king Āryanandivikramāditya of the Paṭola dynasty of Gilgit. Brass, 29 cm. For the inscription, datable to 830-831 A.D., see the chapter on inscriptions. Note the heavy kusti falling from the diadem on the shoulders, the Scytho-Turkish dress and high boots of the king. Both hold a book, most probably of the Prajñāpāramitā. The right hand of Śākyamuni seems to bestow wealth in the form of a jewel-vomitting mongoose distinct from the usual kirtimukha. (Courtesy Mr. R. H. Ellsworth, New York.)

the king of Paṭola Sou-lin-t'o-i-tche is said by the Chinese chronicles to have died in about 740 A.D. The date of the Hatun inscription, if expressing a year of the Laukika era so commonly observed in Kashmir, should rather read 672, 772 or 872 A.D. and this can hardly correspond to the reign of Sou-lin-t'o-i-tche. The important fact is that these inscriptions provide us with names, of which parts such as Paṭola, Āditya and Nandi, are, it seems, constantly recurrent, and such recurrence occurs in the inscription on a brass Akṣobhya, No. 31 in Pal's *Bronzes of Kashmir* and No. 16C in von Schroeder's *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes* (which we will both abbreviate as *BK* and *ITB*). The king, fully dressed in Central Asiatic style, has titles and the name of Mahārājādhirāja Parameśvara Paṭolaṣāhi Āryanandivikramādityanandideva. The inscription is further dated the year 6 of, most probably, the Laukika era (Fig. 103).

Another brass of the same style and period, probably a Vairocana (*BK*, 30 and *ITB*, 16B) has an inscription, dated the year 8 or 9, stating that the sculpture was ordered by the Mahāgajapati Śaṅkarasena and Princess Devaśrī, who were thus contemporaries of Vikramādityanandi. To the same group of brasses, we may include the Śākyamuni *BK*, 22 and *ITB*, 16A, and so many others which are obviously of the same stylistic brand.

A date can safely be guessed if we compare these brasses with the Sugatidarśana Lokeśvara (*BK*, 51 and *ITB*, 18A) dated to the reign of Queen Diddā in the last quarter of the tenth century, which shows quite a late stage of the genuine Paṭola style of north-eastern Kashmir adapted in the south Kashmiri style. The two abovementioned brasses could thus be no later than 931 and 934 A.D. respectively, thus providing us with a *terminus ante*.

The date of ca 700 A.D. for both Śāktidevī (Fig. 49) in Chhatradi and Lakṣaṇādevī (Fig. 43) in Bharmaur, and the eighth century for Narsimha (Fig. 113) and Gaṇeśa, also in Bharmaur, allows us to date most of the bronzes that von Schroeder attributes to the Swat valley (in sequences 9, 10, 11 and 12 of *ITB*) to the late seventh century or the eighth century; many of them, although stylistically linked to the Swat, being of other provenances, of which Gilgit and Baltistan are the most likely probabilities. One (9G of *ITB*) in particular, shares

many common features with Śāktidevī in Chhatri and could thus be dated to the late seventh or eighth century, agreeing thus with the 650-750 proposal of von Schroeder. These bronzes (and not brasses) thus precede the fully matured style of Gilgit of which the two inscribed brasses cannot, therefore, be dated 731 and 734 respectively. We propose to date them to the ninth century, i.e., 831 and 834, a date that, once again, agrees with the average relative chronology that von Schroeder proposes for this group of works. Indeed, both 931 and 934 would be too near the Sugatidarśana of Queen Diddā which already shows a greatly developed academic mannerism.

The whole geographical concept of the bronzes of Kashmir and Swat has to be revised and extended northwards, perhaps even towards both Soviet and Chinese Turkestan. And the hitherto relative chronology has to be consequently adapted and most probably new local styles have to be isolated and identified. For, we feel that besides Swat, Dardistan (Gilgit) and Baltistan (Skardu), such places as Khotan, which has, for long, been a Tibetan stronghold, and so many others on both the southern and northern trunks of the Silk Road, must have produced a considerable number of Buddhist bronzes of an Indo-Chinese style which must have been kept by Buddhist refugees when they fled to India and Tibet to escape the Islamic conquest of Central Asia in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

We are now inclined to put forward a southwestern Central Asiatic provenance for some of the bronzes of the so-called Utpala style of Kashmir, mainly characterized by an ogival-pointed mandorla engraved on its border with curling flames of an obvious Chinese and Central Asiatic origin. Iconographically also, Vairocana and Mañjuśrī, who achieved such prominence in Chinese Buddhism, are relatively represented to a greater extent than they were in India proper and some icons such as Vajrapāṇi (*BK*, 60 and *ITB*, 18B) bear an unmistakable Chinese and an even more pronounced Japanese look in the treatment of the face and the design of the *vajra*. Let us also remember how Tibetan chronicles emphasize the role that Central Asia, including Turkestan and northern Afghanistan, has played, besides India and China, in the formation of Tibetan art.

The main characteristics of this northern "Kashmiri" group of styles are:

- they are Buddhist;
- three-pointed crowns studded with pearls;
- round heads with puffy faces and Mongoloid eyes inlaid with electrum;
- four-pointed shoulder-cap (*camail*) with sun and moon symbols and Central Asiatic dresses;
- stylized rocks, inhabited by animals and on which donors eventually occur, as a plinth for the base;
- seat supported by lions at the corners, "Greek" pillars and capitals and an atlantes in the centre;
- mandorlas and ogival-pointed *prabhāvalis* or nimbuses, with single or double studded inner arch, engraved with curling flames in the Chinese style;
- the modelling of the torso is smoother than that in southern Kashmir;
- a rounded or squarish fringed piece of brocade often hangs down from the seat.

The varied designs of the lotuses seem to give a valuable clue, at least in the case of a few groups, that could lead to the identification of well-defined stylistic sub-groups connected with Central Asia and even China.

Although still on a hypothetical level, we are now strongly inclined to believe that some paintings of early Buddhist monasteries of Ladakh, Zaskar and Spiti could well date to an earlier period than actually stated and could thus have been executed during the dynastic period of Tibet. We allude principally to the paintings of the Gsum. brtgs in Alchi in which people are depicted who were neither Indians, nor Tibetans, nor Iranians, but who can physically and by their dresses and customs best be linked with the Sogdians of Trans-Oxiana in present Soviet Turkestan, as suggested by morphological parallels from mural paintings from Piandjikent and, more particularly, Balalyk Tepe. Of those Sogdians we know that, before they came to be submitted to Islam in the tenth century, they used to found settlements as far as in China, being particularly specialized in trade. We put forward the hypothesis that Sogdians who came to settle in Alchi were responsible for the earliest paintings of the Gsum. brtgs which they

Fig. 104. Śākyamuni. Brass, inlaid with electrum and copper, ht. 33.5 cm. Gilgit area. First half of the ninth century. We can compare this brass with the wooden panel of Māravijaya in the Markulādevī temple in Udaipur, Lahaul. (Courtesy of the Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena, California.)

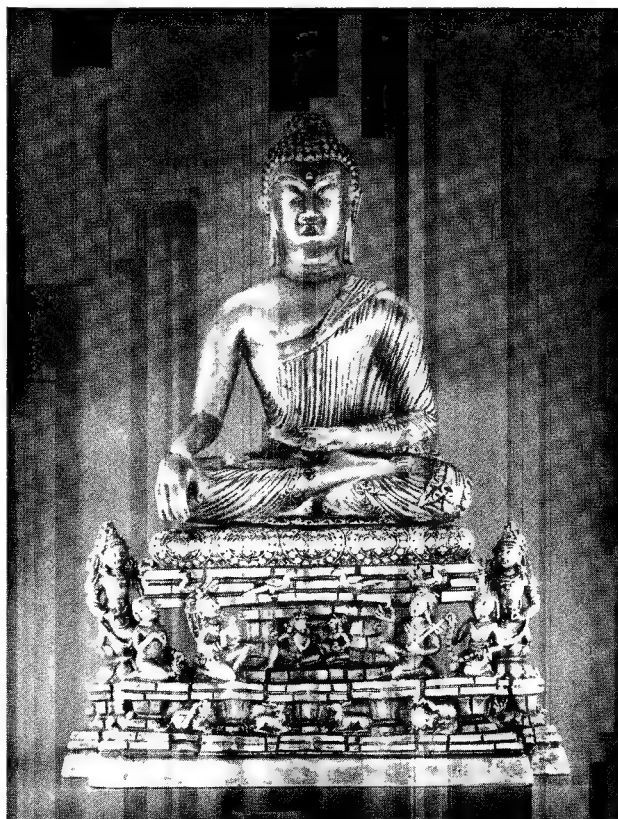


Fig. 105. Akṣobhya-Vajrasattva and his Prajñā Māmakī on four elephants. Brass inlaid with electrum and copper, ht. 14.3 cm. Gilgit area or Lahaul. Late ninth or early tenth century. The crowns, the way Māmakī sits on the left thigh of the Jina and the veil flowing from her headgear are typical of Western Himalaya and more particularly of Chamba. Although iconographically a Vajrasattva, the icon clearly depicts Akṣobhya (of whom Vajrasattva is indeed a related form) as the central Jina: his seat consists of four elephants (the elephant being the vehicle of Akṣobhya) facing the four quarters, and the four Jinās seem to be depicted in the four triangular elements of his crown. (Courtesy Mr. R. H. Ellsworth.)



Fig. 106. Bhairavi. Brass, ht. 11.5 cm. Central Asia (?). Ninth-tenth century. This work, with which Pal's BK Nos. 70 and 189 are very close parallels in workmanship, has many Chinese and Central Asiatic features, such as the skull-cup, the round and puffed face (compare with those of BK 102 which is, in all evidence, a Central Asiatic work), and the extremities of the dupattā flowing in a definite Chinese way. Still at a purely hypothetical level, we are tempted to assign to those Hindu bronzes a Khotanese origin as Hinduism came also to be settled around Khotan, although even the Turfan area of the northern Silk Road cannot be excluded.

founded as early as the tenth century. However, the style they introduced in Ladakh is totally unknown, except for some parallels from Piandjikent and Balalyk Tepe, and being neither Chinese or Indian, nor Iranian — although related with Iran and Afghanistan — we may surmise that it is representative of one of the Turkish styles that had then spread in Western Central Asia and which, because of Islamic and later Mongol conquests, almost completely disappeared in its homeland, surviving only in such remote places as Alchi and Qasr Amra (Syria) where they had formerly settled.

We have had to develop the general context briefly in order to get an idea of the intricate complexity of links between Chamba and its neighbouring regions.

The main link was of course with southern Kashmir and this is further substantiated by the fact that as far as we know, no Buddhist settlement of any importance has been recorded in Chamba despite the evidence of stylistic features that imply occasional Buddhist influence from north-western and north-eastern Kashmir (three-pointed crown, long *uttariya*, *dhammilla*).

Two striking features of the production in Chamba are:

- (1) a main current of artistic influence from south and north Kashmir and Central Asia that often alternated or even intermingled with the influence of various Deccani and northern Indian styles such as Vākāṭaka-Kalacūrī, Çalukya and Pratihāra;
- (2) a steady adherence to classical idioms and taste and hence a much closer relationship between metal, stone and even wood sculpture than is generally the case with the central and the eastern groups. For this very reason, we will deal here with the whole of the artistic production, including stone and wood, with, however, a special focus on metal sculpture.

The rough chronological sequence of Chamba's main stylistic phases can be classified into four periods:

- I. An early classical period, starting as soon, perhaps, as the early sixth century and



ending in the early eighth century. The main artistic influence initially emanated from western Deccan and north-western Kashmir with which southern Kashmiri architectonic and stylistic patterns soon merged.

- II. Soon after Meruvarman, in about the early eighth century, Chamba came under the political sway of Kashmir with the conquest of Lalitāditya. Kashmiri influence and designs were boosted to such a degree that in many cases, one could hardly distinguish between Kashmiri and Chamba production.
- III. With the foundation of the town of Chamba at the end of the first quarter of the tenth century, Kashmiri influence seems to have been replaced at least partially by a classical north Indian Pratihāra current for about one century after which this Pratihāra renewal merged with later classical Kashmiri artistic tradition.
- IV. A post-classical period followed and lasted until the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. During this period, the classical tradition mingling later Pratihāra and Kashmiri styles reached an almost academic standpoint while an original and true folkish art made its appearance.

The main iconological features which act as "fossil-pilots" for Chamba are (see Fig. 107 a):

- (1) The ringed mace held by Viṣṇu and Durgā is typical of Chamba during Periods II and III, even though it may be occasionally seen in Kashmiri works.
- (2) Garuḍa often bears a pot but always has his wings and tail patterned in a cross with feathers so designed as to resemble fish bones. This pattern occurs regularly from Period II onwards up to the present day but also appears sporadically in other places as far as the Mañjuśrī Lhakhang in Alchi (Ladakh) and, even, in a few brasses from U.P.
- (3) Besides the classical southern Kashmiri crown of the Iranian and Gupta variety (3a) that was characteristic from the end of Period I until the end of Period III, a typical north-western Kashmiri three-pointed diadem came into general use from the ninth century (3b) up to the present day after undergoing a slight modification in about

the fifteenth-sixteenth century (3c). This same three-pointed diadem is also common to the northern Kashmiri style of brasses.

- (4) Lions have a star-, spiral- or rincel-shaped design on both the fore and hind quarters and the tail curls backwards as in Fig. 107a, 4 (Period IV).
- (5) The feminine fashion, although linked to that of Kashmir, is particular to Chamba but also to the northern Kashmiri style —
  - (a) The rear and top of the head are veiled by an *uttariya* or long silk scarf, the ends of which hang loosely beside the thighs (Periods I to IV). This pattern, which should not be confused with a *prabhāvalī*, is common to the whole of western H.P. and extends northwards to Gilgit and to Ladakh (Alchi);
  - (b) The hair is bound in a *dhammilla* or curled bun on the side, generally above the left shoulder (Periods II to III);
  - (c) The *vanamālā* or classical garland is always present;
  - (d) The bracelets consist of two large bangles bordering a sequence of smaller bangles decorated with a median row of buttons (Periods III and IV). However, these are also common in Bihar and Bengal and are even to be seen on early eighteenth century Nepalese embossed portraits of donors (Changu Narayan, Queen Bhuvanalaṣṭmī, 1704, etc.);
  - (e) Besides the classical necklace, a long string of pearls of the *hāra* variety hangs loosely on the chest and flows down between the breasts (Periods I to IV);
  - (f) A sleeveless blouse with a pointed lower edge is often worn during Periods I and II.
- (6) Viṣṇu is very commonly depicted during the Kashmiri Period (II) and assumes three main forms, namely —
  - (a) Vaikuṇṭha with four heads (lion to the right and boar to the left), riding Garuḍa;
  - (b) Caturānana with four heads, standing between Cakra and Gadā;
  - (c) Vāsudeva with one head, standing.
- (7) In metal icons, the eyes are often inlaid with electrum, an alloy of gold and silver.



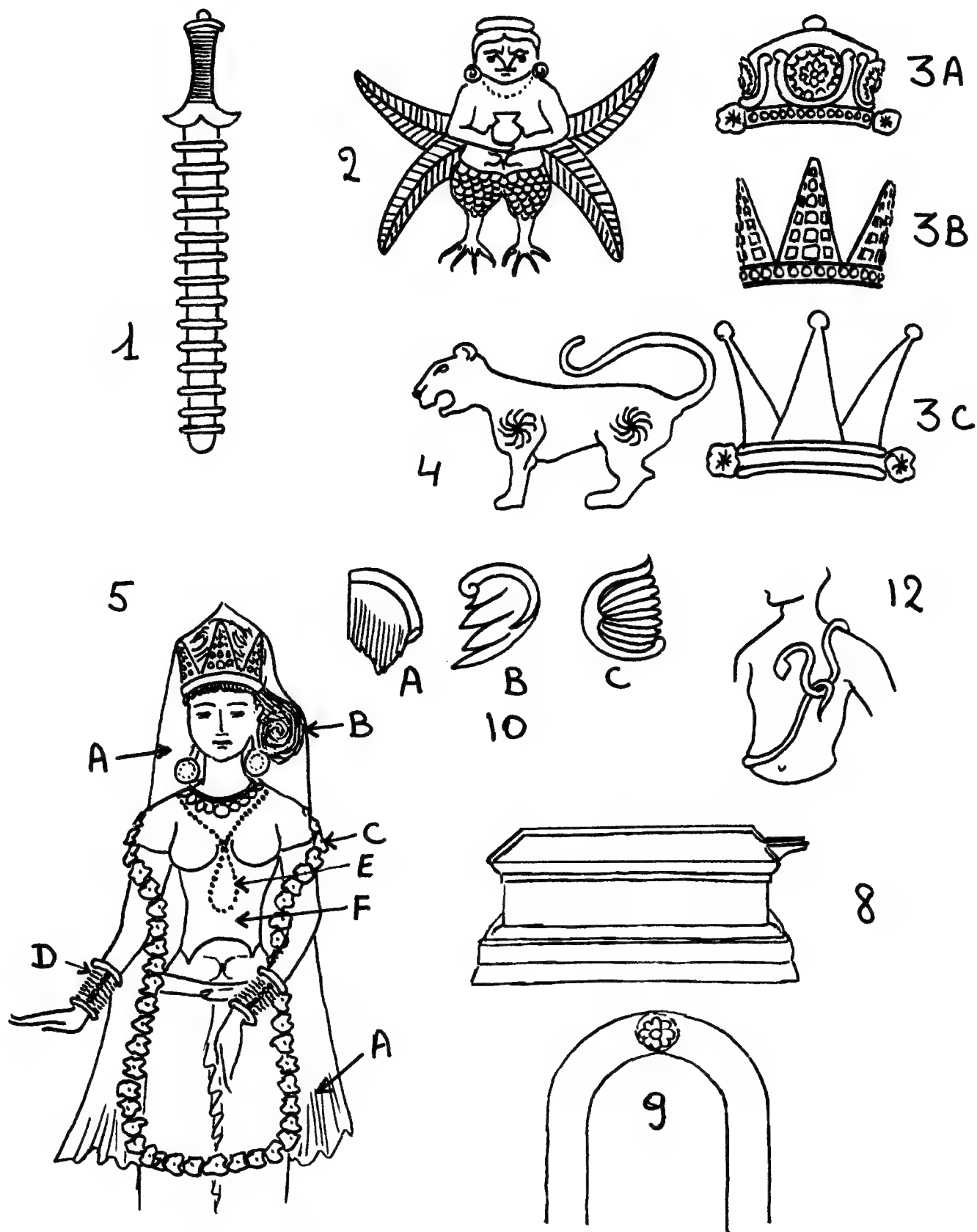


Fig. 107a. Iconological features of Chamba.

- (8) The *pūṭha* is occasionally provided with a *nāla* or spout projecting from the side, a feature which occurs commonly in Kashmir.
- (9) As in Kashmir, the top of the mandorla is very often adorned with a rosette.
- (10) The ears of Gaṇeśa are designed as in 'A' late in Period I or early in Period II, as in 'B' during Periods II and III and as in 'C' during Period IV. Moreover, Gaṇeśa appears often, in Periods II and III, as an iconographical variant of Heramba, having one or even two lions as vehicle instead of the rat (Fig. 122).
- (11) The torso and belly are often strongly modelled as in Kashmir and the navel is often patterned in a cross-shaped motif.
- (12) Śiva and Gaṇeśa generally wear a snake in

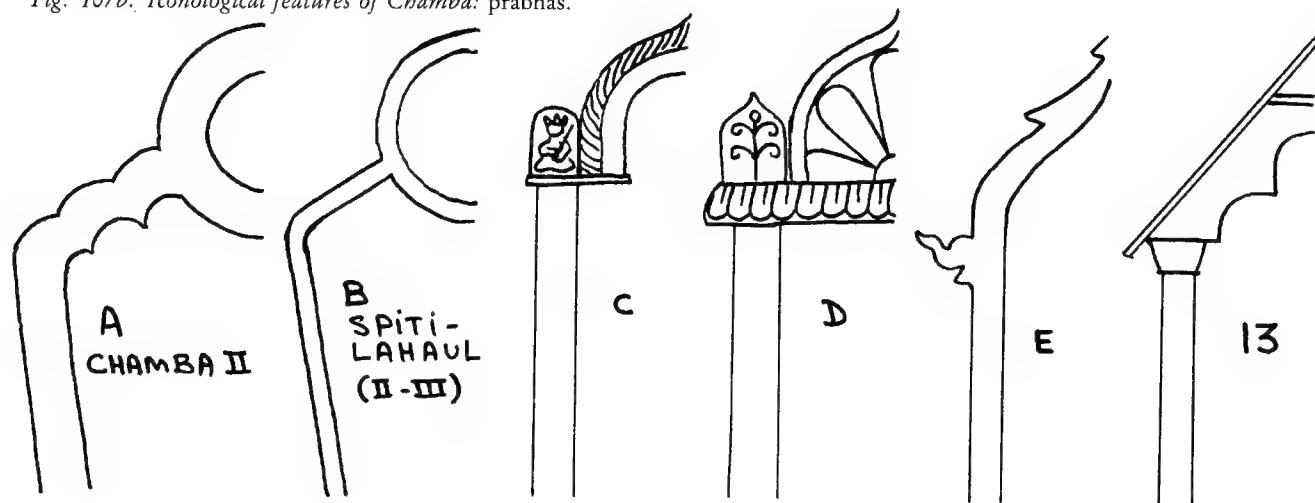
the way of the sacrificial thread (Periods II, III, IV).

- (13) The Kashmiri gabled roof with an inner trefoiled arch is a common architectonic pattern.

The *prabhās* of metal sculpture are of a heavy type (A) in Chamba during Period II; in Lahaul, however, they are quite thin (B) and their use extended to Period III.

In stone sculpture, the classical Pratihāra *caitya* (C) of Period III evolved into a more folkish interpretation (D) during Period IV. In metal sculpture, both cast and embossed, an ogive *prabhā* (E) with a stylized elephant's or *makara*'s head protruding from both the sides (a morphological deviation of the mango-like pattern terminating the extremities of the cross-bar) appears to be common.

Fig. 107b. Iconological features of Chamba: *prabhās*.



## THE EARLY CLASSICAL PERIOD (500-800 A.D.)

EVER SINCE GOETZ in his *Early Wooden Temples of Chamba* (1955) evolved a critical apparatus regarding the early development of artistic trends in the valley of Chamba, no fresh attempt at a closer historical approach has been made.

It is generally believed that the temples of Lakṣaṇādevī in Bharmaur and Śaktidevī in Chhatradi and their main icons, together with the brass Gaṇeśa, Narasiṃha and Nandi in Bharmaur, all date to the reign of Meruvarman in the early eighth century.

However, a fresh examination of some details of both the temples calls for some remarks:

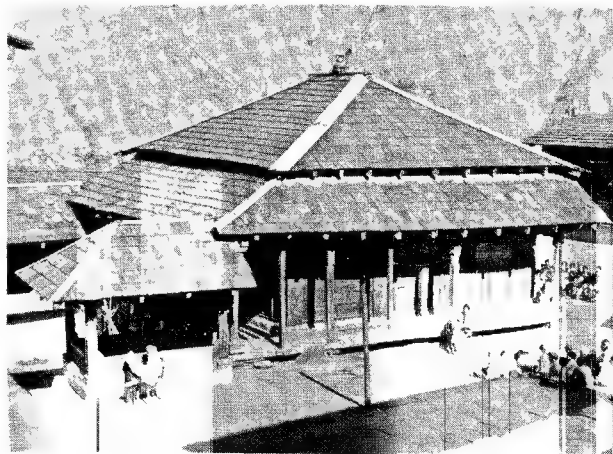
- (1) The capitals of the Lakṣaṇādevī temple in Bharmaur are still closely related to those in Ajanta of which they obviously represent a final evolution (Fig. 109). They evolve in nearly every aspect and detail from the Ajanta prototypes which may be dated to the late fifth century. Capitals of this type are found — as far as we know — only in Ajanta, Aurangabad, Bharmaur and Chhatradi. We are reluctant to admit a gap of more than one generation between the capitals in Ajanta and those in Bharmaur. This gives a date ranging between about 483 or 484 and 510 A.D. at the latest for Bharmaur. Stylistically, these capitals *still belong to a creative process*: they differ from those

in Ajanta only by a greater emphasis put on verticality and the lateral scrolls of the abacus.

Rock cut architecture such as that of Ajanta is of course immovable, but not the craftsmen who were responsible for the quick spread in almost remote places as they had some time, due to particular political or economical circumstances, to move far away from their actual working site.

The sudden fall of the Vākāṭaka power in 483 must have brought the huge works of Ajanta to an abrupt stop that consequently compelled artists and carvers to migrate elsewhere. No wonder that some of them

Fig. 108. Chhatradi, Śaktidevī temple.



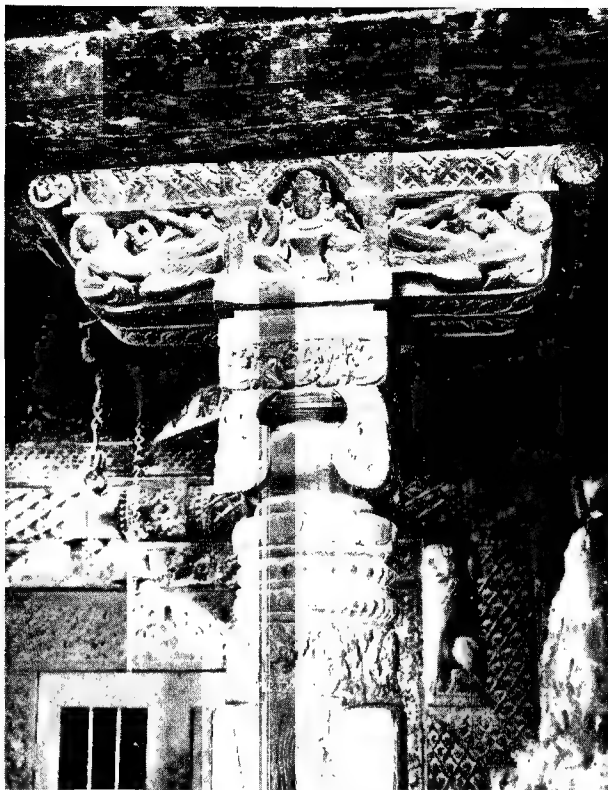


Fig. 109. Bharmaur. A pillar capital. (Courtesy AIIS.)



Fig. 111. Bharmaur. "T" shaped torus of the door-jamb of the inner sanctum. Note the still early classicism of the lion. (Courtesy AIIS.)

could have been driven northwards towards the Central Asiatic borderland, where trade and Buddhism were flourishing and could have stayed in Bharmaur, participating into the building of a new temple.

If a date between 510 and 540 is admissible, these capitals were thus intended for an earlier temple, the construction of which chronologically corresponds to the estimated date of the reign of king Maru, the "mythical" founder of Bharmaur. A new building was erected — or the old one was enlarged — in about 700 by Meruvarman and parts of the former were integrated into the new one.

- (2) This is further substantiated by evidence of later transformations which can be seen in the *mukhamandapa* in Bharmaur: oblong in structure, it has four single and two crossed capitals at two angles (Fig. 110).

A *vedikā* of carved wood encloses this halved *mandapa*, and like the capitals, its beams unmistakably evoke the jambs and

lintels of doorways or large windows originating from the older building (Fig. 38).

It should be observed that the single capitals Nos. 1 and 6 support a beam *perpendicular* to the abacus and that similarly, the outer lateral protruding section of the angular capitals Nos. 2 and 5 has no effective function, a fact that constitutes a flagrant architectonic oddity. Hence we are tempted to interpret these capitals as belonging to an original *navarāṅga* that was reduced to a  $\frac{1}{3}$  *mandapa* when the temple was rebuilt or transformed under Meruvarman.

- (3) The inner doorway to the sanctum displays the Gupta T-shaped frame with heavy torus and a single inner moulding of rincels. This is also part of the original building to which the inner door jambs and crooked lintel of a much later style and workmanship were added (Fig. 111).

This particular design of the crooked lintel is a typical Himachali feature that later

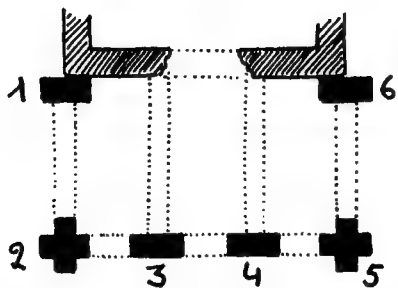
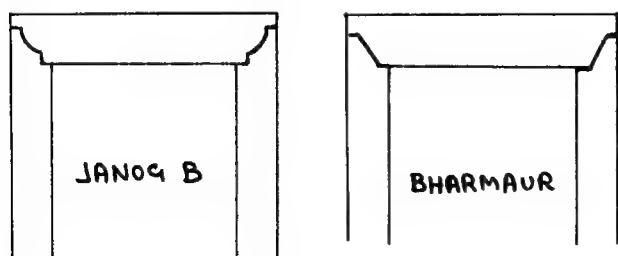


Fig. 110. Bharmaur. Layout of the presently reduced maṇḍapa (not to scale).

on, as in Janog temple B, for example, evolved into a concave design (Fig. 111b). The purpose must have been architectonic (earthquakes).



The outer doorway in Bharmaur is structurally quite identical with the inner one in Chhatradi but completely differs both in style and workmanship from the earlier part of the inner doorway in Bharmaur.

The inner part of these later and structurally much more elaborate doorways is identical with that of the earlier inner doorway in Bharmaur. The few Ajanta-type single capitals in Chhatradi have a fresher look; they are more recent and are also of a cruder, drier workmanship from which it may be guessed that they were later copies (Fig. 47).

- (4) We doubt whether the ceiling in Bharmaur pertains to the original building (Fig. 39). It is an attempt to combine Deccan and Malwa decorative features with a Kashmiri architectonic conception. Here again, the ceiling in Chhatradi is later, although of a similar decorative conception (Fig. 46).

As in the temple of Pandrethan (Kashmir), that

could belong to the same period or to a slightly later one, where we observe the image of Lakuliśa and, in the corners of the ceiling, Gandharvas with hair curled in a wig-like appearance so typical of the Vākāṭaka and Kalacūri sculpture in the Deccan, a strong influence of the sixth century art of Deccan and Malwa affects the earliest production in Bharmaur and elsewhere (a *dvārapāla* and a Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhara in Nirmand, see Figs. 74 and 76) in which stylistic features of the Vākāṭaka, Kalacūri, Maukhari, Maitraka and Caḷukya are evident. Kashmiri influence became progressively evident in Chamba only after Meruvarman, whose reign must have been followed by the conquest of Chamba by the Kārkoṭa king of Kashmir, Lalitāditya.

Although similar, the outer door-frame in Bharmaur differs from the inner one in Chhatradi by its more supple workmanship, more lively postures and also its greater anatomical slenderness. But the work in Bharmaur is so worn out that a closer comparison is hardly possible. However, it seems that the outer door-frame in Bharmaur sustains a rough comparison with the brass icons of Lakṣaṇādevī (Bharmaur) and Śaktidevī (Chhatradi), both attributed by inscriptions to the reign of Meruvarman. Both are indeed of the same workmanship and still retain some reminiscence of the stone sculpture of the Deccan of the Kalacūri and Caḷukyan periods; this fact is particularly obvious in the extremely elaborate headgear of Lakṣaṇā although the same style and fashion are common also in north-western Kashmir. However, both sculptures display a degree of stiffness and rigidity that characterizes so many provincial and peripheral productions related to the genuine and creative phase of a style. This mannerism can best be observed in the hieratic look and expression of the faces, the unnatural way the breasts are rendered and the dullness of the folds of the *uttariya*. The design of the blades of the trident of Lakṣaṇādevī is obviously Central Asiatic and quite similar to that of the branches of the Chinese *vajras* in the T'ang period. A similar stiffness and unrealistic rendering of life is also, and still more obviously, proper to the huge Nandi icon of Bharmaur, also attributed to Gugga by an inscription. The date of these three brass icons may be assigned to about 700 and we may surmise that the outer door-frame in Bharmaur is of the same period.



The inner door-frame in Chhatradi was consequently copied from the one in Bharmaur, but apparently much later, to judge from the cruder and dry academic workmanship, the affected stiffness of the postures and the short anatomical type with overemphasized hips and bellies, the disproportionate limbs. This work already heralds the carvings on the inner door-frame of the sanctum of Markulādevī in Udaipur (Lahaul) which could be dated to the eleventh century.

The ninth century could thus be fixed as a provisional date for Chhatradi. We are even tempted to give the same date to the two smaller brass Buddhist Tārās (Figs. 93 & 95) which are worshipped in the Śakti temple in Chhatradi. The Liṅga with the Śiva bust that is kept in the same sanctum (Fig. 91) could be dated to the late eighth or the early ninth century and is stylistically related more to the south Kashmiri art of the Kārkoṭa dynasty (600-856). He already wears a snake instead of the classical *yajñopavīta*.

Two more monumental brasses in Bharmaur are attributed to Meruvarman's reign or, at least, are by inscription stated to be the work of Gugga. They are Gaṇeśa and Narasimha (Figs. 112 & 113). Their jewels are distinctive of Chamba's fashion, but the crowns are obviously of a distinct southern Kashmiri type. While the anatomical modelling of Narasimha still tallies with that of Lakṣaṇā and Śakti, Gaṇeśa differs widely in this respect and shows a definite Kashmiri modelling of the chest and belly. The base of Narasimha depicts rows of mountains and peaks in a schematical way common to Central Asia, while a squatting atlantes between two lions is depicted on that of Gaṇeśa. The man is naked and has elephant's ears; but for the particular posture of the man, such a theme is typical of many of the later Buddhist bronzes of north-western Kashmir.

Narasimha's inscription is illegible. That of Gaṇeśa referring to Meruvarman and to Gugga, the

Fig. 112. Bharmaur. Gaṇeśa. (Courtesy ASI.)

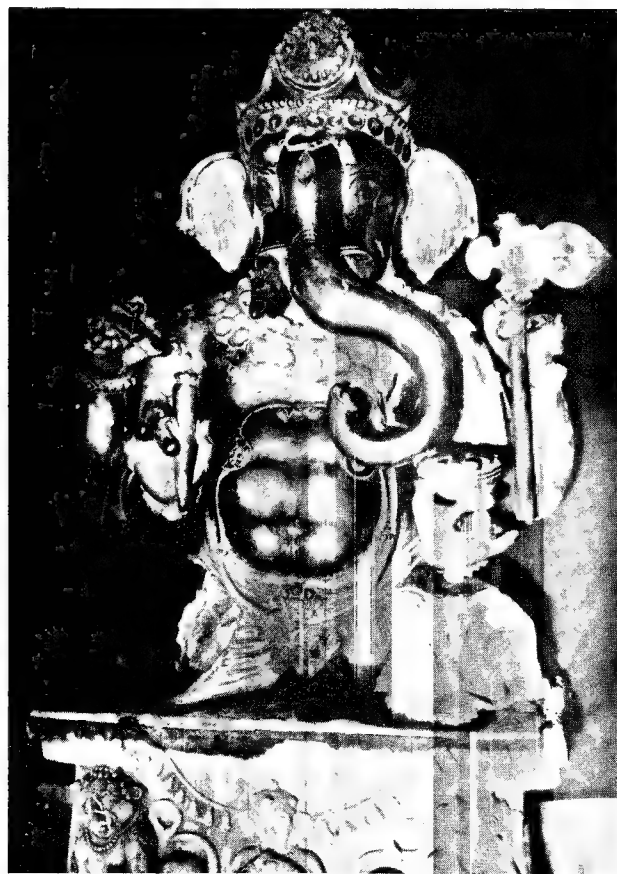


Fig. 113. Bharmaur. Narasimha. (Courtesy ASI.)

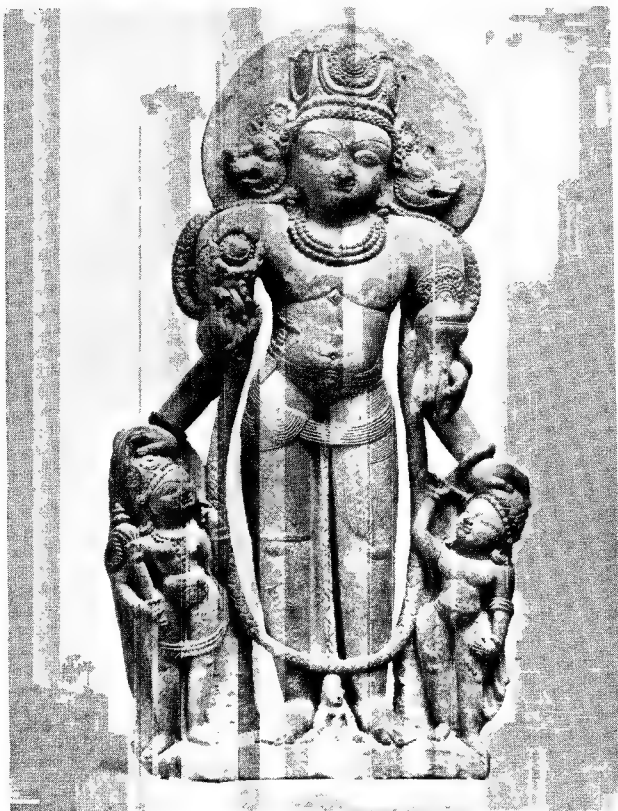


artist who made the icons of Lakṣaṇā and Śaktidevī, seems no longer credible.

Narasimha, being still aesthetically close to Meruvarman's time, can be dated to the early phase of the probable conquest by Lalitāditya, say, to the mid eighth century. Gaṇeśa, whose base is considerably more affected by north-western Kashmiri aesthetics, has hence to be of a later date, say the late eighth or the early ninth century. These statements should be viewed in a provisional perspective as they rely only on the brief glimpse we had of these icons almost hidden by clothes, and a scrutiny of photographs that were not too clear. We feel, nevertheless, that the discrepancies so far noticed leave the field open to further examination and discussion.

We have considerably exceeded the chronological limit we had fixed for a critical evaluation of the early classical period (sixth to early eighth century) as most of the works hitherto discussed are generally credited to Meruvarman's reign.

Fig. 114. Stone Vaikunṭhanātha, Kashmir. Ninth century. Musée Guimet, Paris. (Courtesy Musées Nationaux.)



A relative chronological summary will help to clarify this matter:

ca 500 A.D. An early wooden temple is built in Bharmaur of which some columns, capitals and the inner door-frame are still existing.

ca 700 A.D. This temple is transformed into a new one, an outer door-frame is added and the icons of Lakṣaṇādevī, Śaktidevī and Nandi are cast by Gugga.

ca 720 A.D. Although hypothetical, the conquests of Lalitāditya must have included Chamba. The brass Narasimha is cast in Bharmaur.

ca 800 A.D. The brass Gaṇeśa is cast in Bharmaur, and also the Linga with Śiva bust in Chhatradi.

9th-10th c. Inner door-frame in Chhatradi and the early panels of the ceiling of Markulādevī temple in Udaipur (Lahaul).

11th c. Inner door-frame of the sanctum of Markulādevī temple in Udaipur.

Fig. 115. Stone Vaikunṭhanātha, eastern Kashmir or Chamba. Ninth century, ht. ca 80 cm. (Priv. Coll.)

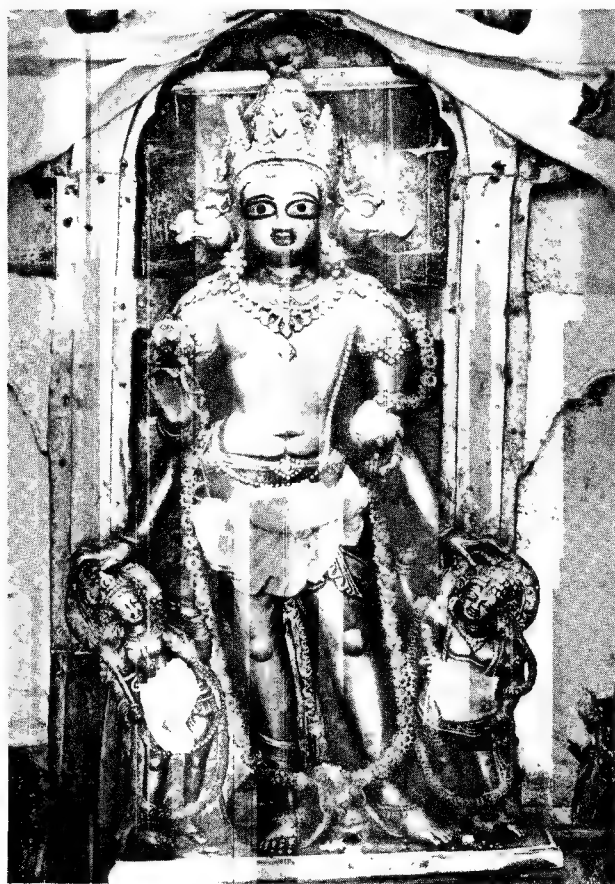




*River goddess Gangā flanking the shrine doorway. Viśveśvara temple, Bajaura, Kullu. Ninth-tenth century.*

## THE KASHMIRI PERIOD (Eighth to early tenth century)

Fig. 116. *Vaikunṭhanātha*. Brass, ht. 138 cm. Chamba, Hari Rai temple. Late eighth or early ninth century. (Courtesy AIIS.)



ALTHOUGH WE HAVE no historical evidence of Lalitāditya's conquest of Chamba after Meruvarman's reign, we may surmise that early in the eighth century a considerable part of Himachal Pradesh, including Chamba, the southern part of Lahaul and the valleys of Kullu and Kangra came under the rule of the Kashmiri kings of the Kārkoṭa dynasty. Archaeological evidence points abundantly to this fact: many Kashmiri fashioned images of Viṣṇu of the eighth-ninth century, and stylistically related sculptures, are to be found not only in the valley of Chamba but also in Kangra (Bajjnath), Kullu (Bajaura) and even in Nirath (Sutlej). As already stated in the introductory part of this section, the southern Kashmiri style permeates Himachal Pradesh to such an extent that it is often very difficult to establish whether a given icon is of Kashmiri or of Himachal provenance.

However, as already observed by von Schroeder in his *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, whereas the crown of Viṣṇu is of the Indo-Iranian type with circular medallions (Fig. 114) in Kashmir proper, in Chamba it is provided either with leaf-shaped (Fig. 115) or even with triangular elements as it is in the northern Kashmir Buddhist stylistic tradition (Fig. 116).

The arm-bands in Chamba are provided either with a heavy lozenged or a triangular main motif.



The ringed mace is, it seems, particularly typical of Chamba and occurs sporadically as far as in Bajaura (Kullu) (Fig. 31) and Nirath (Sutlej) (Fig. 117). To the best of our knowledge, the ringed mace occurs in Kashmir in only one stone sculpture of Vaikuṇṭha in the Srinagar Museum that was discovered in Verinag in the eastern part of Kashmir, not far from Chamba. In this work also the wing patterns of Garuḍa and the mandorla morphologically tally with those in Chamba. Another Vaikuṇṭha in the Srinagar Museum most probably also comes from a spot close to Chamba as suggested by the mandorla, Garuḍa holding a pot, the design of the wings, the crown and the flowing extremities of the *paṭṭa* on the sides. We attribute also to the Chamba area the stone Vaikuṇṭhanātha of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Fig. 120) that Pal discusses in "A Brahmanical Triad from Kashmir . . ." (*Archives of Asian Art* XXVII, 1973-74, Figs. 6 & 7, p. 37 and that we compare with the same brass subject in Chhatradi (Fig. 100).

Fig. 117. Nirath (Middle Sutlej). Vaikuṇṭhanātha.

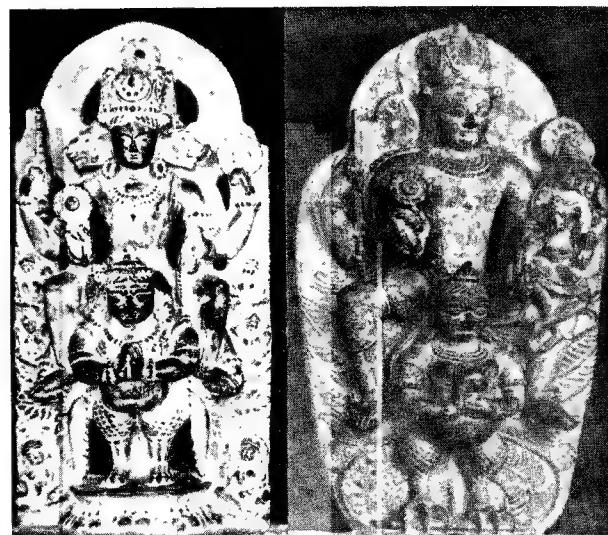


Fig. 118. (Left) Vaikuṇṭhanātha, Verinag. Tenth-eleventh century. Srinagar Museum. (Courtesy ASI.)

Fig. 119. (Right) Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Tenth-eleventh century. Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar. (Courtesy S. P. Museum, Srinagar and ASI.)

In Chamba proper, a white marble Caturānana of the southern Kashmiri style is worshipped in a small shrine next to the *nandimaṇḍapa* facing the Lakṣmī-Dāmodara temple in the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex (Fig. 121). Quite small in dimension (ca 75 cm.), it could be one of the earliest specimens of Vaiṣṇava icons and possibly date as far back as the eighth century.

Fig. 115 displaying another stone Vāsudeva of about the same height has a crown and armlets of the Chamba style; the belly protrudes at the navel, and this anatomical part does not have the usual Kashmiri modelling with the navel deeply set, patterned in a cross. The same can be said of a stone Caturānana in Nirath (Sutlej) which wears a southern Kashmiri crown but bears a ringed mace (Fig. 117).

The most renowned of these Vaiṣṇava icons is, of course, the huge brass (138 cm.) Caturānana which is worshipped in the Hari Rai temple in Chamba (Fig. 116). It has the appearance of a genuine southern Kashmiri statue, but the crown unmistakably tallies with the local fashion as do the arm-bands and the necklace. The date however still remains conjectural as it is for all the other sculptures





Fig. 120. *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa*, front and back views. Chamba. Tenth century. Courtesy (The Alice Heeramanek Collection.) Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

hitherto discussed in this section. Pal, in his *Bronzes of Kashmir*, assigns these southern Kashmiri brass Viṣṇus to the ninth century and the Caturānana No. 9 of his book to ca 800 on the basis of palaeographic evidence. We may thus fairly assign the prototype to the Kārkoṭa dynasty (600-856) and within this possibly also to the eighth century. As a new Kashmiri style most probably must have originated with the advent of the Utpala dynasty (856-1003), we may also guess that the Kārkoṭa Vaiṣṇava prototype by then became obsolete.

The date of the Hari Rai Caturānana can thus be estimated to be between the end of the eighth century, and the end of the first half of the ninth century, and this implies that it was subsequently brought to Chamba town that was founded only at the end of the first quarter of the tenth century.

The small Vāsudeva No. 16E of von Schroeder's *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes* could rather be from southern Lahaul or even Kullu and be dated to the late Kārkoṭa or even the early Utpala period.

We can attribute a Mahiṣāsūramardīnī published in Neven's *New Studies into Indian and Himalayan Sculpture*, No. 38, to this same time span of the late eighth to the mid ninth century, agreeing with von Schroeder (*Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, 25E) to assign its provenance to Chamba (ringed mace and Chamba crown); a curious iconological feature is seen in this Durgā wearing a *channavīra* or cross-belt which seems unusual in north-western India as it is common only to Deccan and South India. An almost similar brass is kept in Chhatradi (Fig. 98).

Fig. 121. *Caturānana*. Marble, ca 75 cm. Chamba, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex, shrine No. 17. Eighth-ninth century.





Fig. 122. Gaṇeśa. Brass, 10.5 cm. Chamba. Ninth-tenth century. Note the three-foiled prabhā. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog, The Hague.)

Fig. 124. Gaṇeśa. Brass, 15.2 cm. Chamba or Lahaul. Tenth-eleventh century. The prabhā with an ogive-pointed nimbus derived from the Buddhist Central Asiatic prabhās originally engraved with curled and undulating flames. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of Christian Humann.)

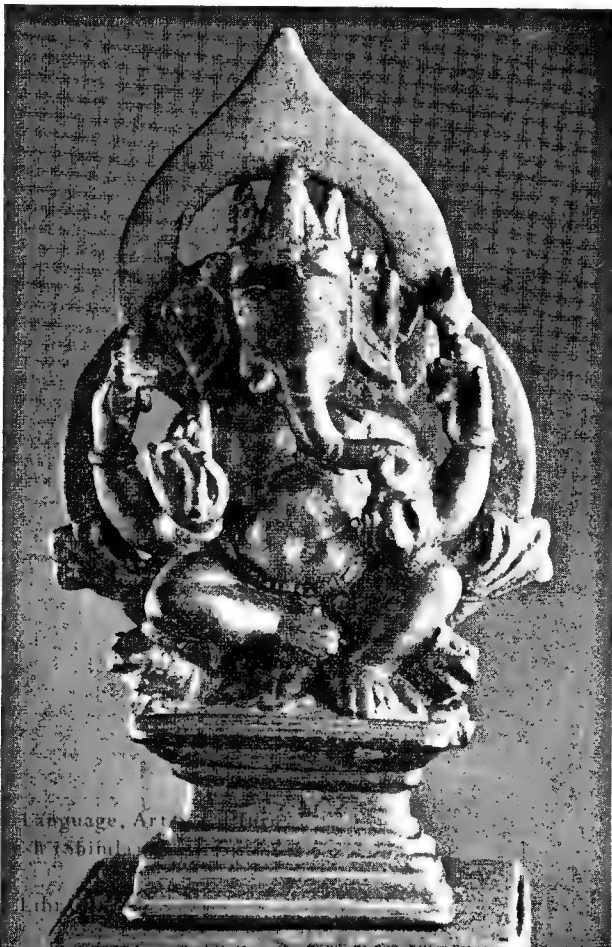


Fig. 123. Stone Gaṇeśa on the door lintel of the Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple in Jagatsukh, Kullu. Ninth-tenth century.

A brass Gaṇeśa seated on a lion (Fig. 122) could be related to Chamba because of the design of the *prabhāmandala* and the extremities of the scarf projecting on the sides. The substitution of a lion for the usual rat as a *vāhana* for Gaṇeśa seems to be another peculiarity of Chamba in Periods II and III. Morphologically related to this brass is another example, however in stone and relating to the Period III, of Gaṇeśa riding a lion on the door lintel of the Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple in Jagatsukh (Kullu). Two more examples of Gaṇeśas riding lions, one brass from Chamba, another small stone apparently more related with Kashmir, are published in Pal's *Elephants and Ivories*, Los Angeles, 1981, Nos. 49 and 50 (Fig. 124). Iconographically we know of a particular form of Gaṇeśa, named Heramba; he rides also a lion while, however, he has five heads.

If we have correctly dated the mature Paṭola style of Gilgit to the early second third of the ninth century, we would then ascribe the early wood panel of the ceiling (Fig. 125) of the Markulādevī temple in Udaipur (Lahaul) to a slightly later date, that is to the second half of the ninth century, as their style shows a later and peripheral development of the mature Paṭola style of Gilgit and Baltistan. Of these panels, those on the ceiling of the *mukhamandapa* and on its northern side are Buddhist (Fig. 126), as is evident from the iconography (frieze of *vajras* and the scene of Māravijaya Śākyaṃuni). The three other scenes are Hindu (Fig. 127). All these carvings of superb aesthetic and technical value have been discussed and described at length by Goetz in his *Early Wooden Temples of Chamba*.

We need only point out the north-western Kashmiri features of facial and anatomical modelling (compare, for instance, the Gilgit Māravijaya with Fig. 121). Curiously, the ringed mace, so typical of Chamba and of the southern part of Lahaul (which was in fact culturally related to Chamba in a later stage) does not yet appear in these Buddhist and Hindu panels as it will occur on the later door-jambs of the *garbhagṛha* in the same shrine in the eleventh century (Fig. 53). In the eastern part of Lahaul, and probably also in Spiti, which we have not yet surveyed, we can infer from clay and stucco sculptures *in situ* at Tabo that the same style prevailed although linked with much narrower *prabhās* and facial features that are definitely of a foreign type, either Turkish or Central



Fig. 125. Ceiling of the inner mandapa, Markulādevī temple, Udaipur, Lahaul. Second half of the ninth century. The work still belongs to an earlier Buddhist shrine, as shown by the ring of vajras still designed in the Central Asiatic way.

Fig. 126. Northern panel of the mandapa, Markulādevī temple, with the Buddhist episode of Māravijaya. Note the stylistic similarity with the Norton Simon Foundation Śākyaṃuni (Fig. 104), the long scarves worn by Māra's damsels. To the left, Māra is shooting an arrow that hit himself as he is seen collapsing on the right side of the composition. The faces are stylistically very close to those of the Gilgit brasses.

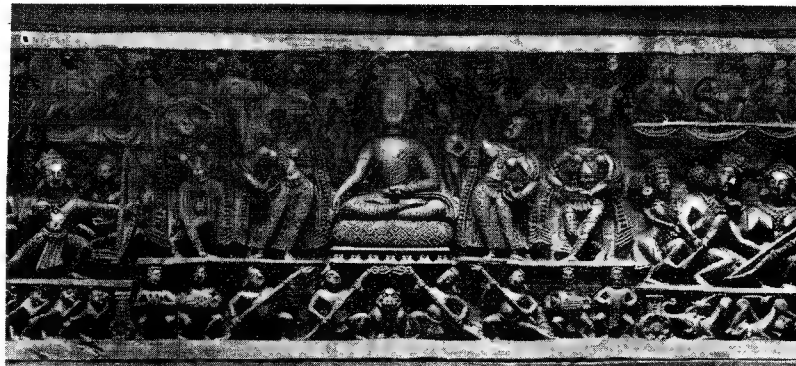


Fig. 127. Two other panels of the same ceiling. The iconography is Śaiva. Note Nāṭeśvara with four legs (a Buddhist iconographical feature), and playing on a *vīṇā*; of his sixteen arms the upper pair displays the Buddhist Nāmasaṅgī-mudrā. To his left he appears in the form of *Sūlapāṇi* holding further a *mālā*, a *mātuluṅga* and a mirror. Amongst the attributes, we recognize the *makaradaṇḍa* or club topped with the head of a makara, another attribute proper to the Buddhist iconography.





Asiatic. Some are even similar to Uzbeks, Mongoloids who settled in the north-eastern area of Afghanistan and in the present Soviet Uzbekistan. We know that the Islamic conquest which started as early as the mid seventh century in Central Asia was responsible for the shift towards east of so many ethnical entities such as Sogdians, Bactrians, Dardi and other Turkish tribes who, according to their needs, settled on the southern border of the Karakoram or infiltrated even into northern Himachal Pradesh (Figs. 128, 129).

It is still premature to isolate the style proper to Khotan, the Li-yul of the Tibetans, although we feel that through an eliminating process, some "Kashmiri" bronzes published by Pal display such a stylistic mixture of patterns from Swat, Gilgit, China, Balavaste (near Khotan), that Khotan is the most suitable place for their provenance (see *BK*, Nos. 60, 70, 82, 83, 88, 89). Particularly striking is the similar facial pattern between Pal's *BK*, No. 83, amongst many others, and a painted Bodhisattva from Balavaste in the British Museum.



Fig. 128. *Durgā*. Brass, 11.5 cm. Lahaul. Tenth-eleventh century. Note the narrow prabhā with the upper ogive-pointed prabhāvali topped by a flower, the two lions and the physiognomy of the goddess which looks definitely non-Indian. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

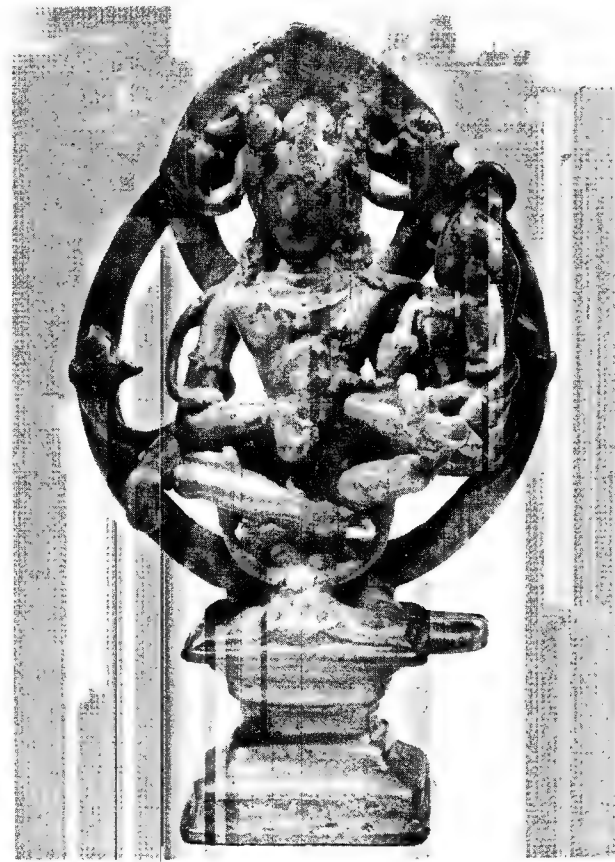


Fig. 129. *Umā-Maheśvara*. Brass, 13.5 cm. Chamba or Lahaul. Eleventh century. Although the attributes are not distinct, the crescent in the bun at the right side and a skull with a snake on the left side allows to identify this brass with Śiva. The mandorla and upward flowing scarf and kusti along with a relatively narrow pīṭha are adapted from the later Buddhist sculptures of Gilgit and Central Asia (compare with Fig. 106). (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

## THE PRATĪHĀRA RENEWAL (Tenth to twelfth century)

WITH THE FOUNDATION of a new capital, that is Chamba town, at about the end of the first quarter of the tenth century, the State of Chamba seems to have gained a new sovereignty, and, without definitely discarding Kashmiri culture, became permeated to North Indian aesthetic patterns of the Pratīhāra dynasty. As is evident in stone architecture in Chamba and elsewhere (Bajaura, Jagatsukh) a new local artistic idiom mingled Kashmiri and Pratīhāra styles. In Lahaul, the north Kashmiri style of the Turki Shahi remained predominant, more particularly in Buddhist bronzes.

We must nevertheless recall that what we term as being stylistically proper to Chamba does not necessarily strictly coincide with the geographical concept of the valley of Chamba, but can even extend to the valleys of Kullu and Kangra. We use the term Chamba as a convenient stylistic concept distinct from those of Kashmir and of the eastern (Sutlej) and the central (Beas) parts of western Himalaya, as this concept relies on works that are mainly to be seen in Chamba.

The third Period is marked by a progressive shift from Kashmiri to Pratīhāra influence, as if Kashmir had slowly lost its political power while Chamba was gaining a new independence and, plausibly also, new territorial gains as Kullu (Bajaura) and the Kangra valley. However, it seems that the

further we proceed northwards and eastwards, the stronger we feel the Kashmiri aesthetic and stylistic current.

The earliest group, perhaps, of sculptures belonging to the Pratīhāra Renewal is to be seen in the Bajaura temple in Kullu (Fig. 18). We date it — although in a perspective of relative chronology and without any absolute certainty — to the tenth century and, taking the datable Gaurī-Śāṅkara group of about the end of the first quarter of the eleventh century in Chamba into consideration, we may surmise Bajaura to be much older, not later than the mid tenth century, and possibly even earlier.

Some relevant features may be noticed in these sculptures:

*Vāsudeva*: The face has been recarved (all the faces and breasts of the group have been damaged by Muslim raiders). Pointed-ogival-*prabhāmaṇḍala* with the inner *āvali* bordered by small curled tongues of fire as commonly engraved in a more schematic way on almost all the mandorlas of the later Buddhist style of Gilgit. The crown, mace and arm-bands are typical of Chamba. Note the folds on the *paridhāna* with the left extremity curling upwards. The extremities of the *uttariya* flowing on the sides are



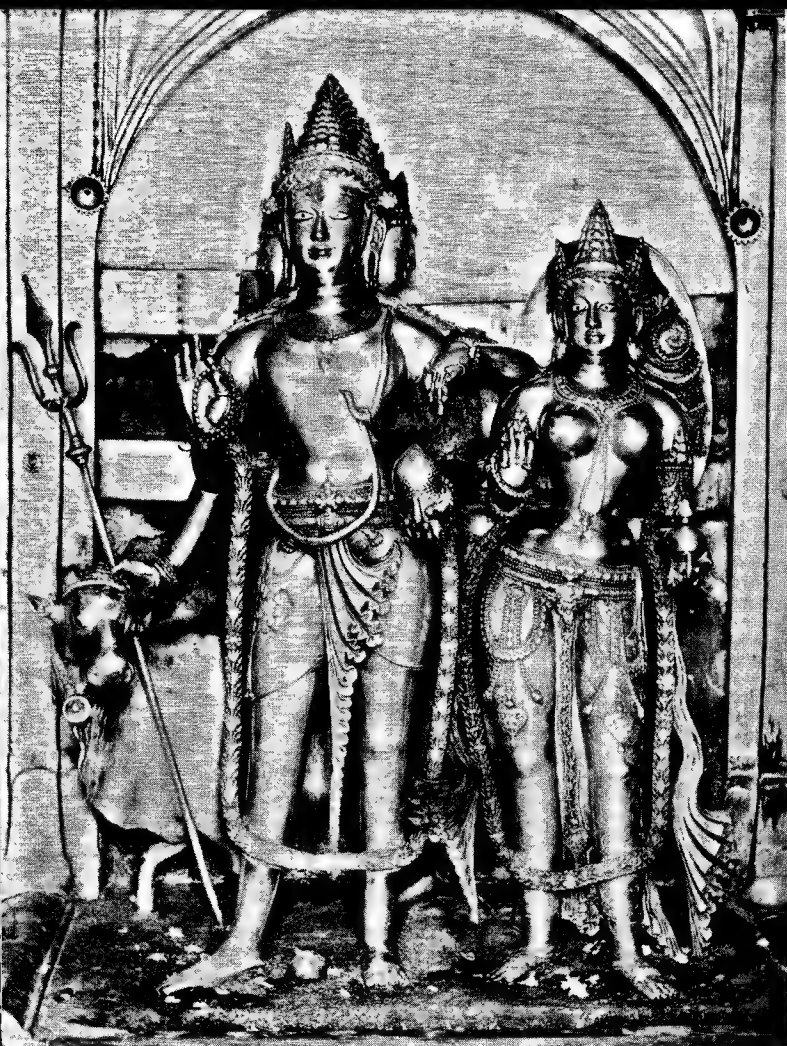


Fig. 130. Gaurī-Śaṅkara group Brass. Chamba, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex, temple No. 10. Ca 1025. Further note the way the armlets are still put in a high position, close to the shoulders, the long studded necklace crossing between the breasts of Gaurī, the unnatural way of putting the breasts high on the torso and their stiff, quite hemispherical design, the way the flowers are detailed on the garland and which will later on turn into a chevron or herring-bone stylization particular to Western Himalaya and, perhaps, Punjab. (Courtesy of AIIS.)

depicted with many folds, no longer in quite the heavy and schematic way as in the preceding period.

**Durgā:** Note the hair bun beside the left side of the head, the necklace flowing between the breasts, the ringed bracelets, the *uttariya* attached to the back of the head.

The fluvial deities at the entrance to the eastern sanctum are carved in the door-jambs, from which we infer that the building is contemporary with these sculptures. Their dress and ornaments are in complete accordance with those of Chamba.

In Chamba town, there is a huge and magnificent brass Gaurī-Śaṅkara group under worship in the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex of temples (Fig. 130). Śiva's height is about 160 cm. This group has until now generally been attributed to the early ninth century as it was believed to be linked to Sāhila-varman, the founder of Chamba town. This work sustains, however, a very close comparison both in style and workmanship with the bust of Śujunīdevī (see p. 125 and the chapter: Inscriptions) that was discovered in Nirmand. From the epigraphic and the palaeographic evidence, this bust is dated from 12th July, 1026 and seemingly made by the same artist who had cast the Gaurī-Śaṅkara group. There could thus only be a few years difference between it and the Gaurī-Śaṅkara group which then could be dated to the end of the first quarter of the eleventh century if we admit its anteriority. A few details, indeed, favour an early eleventh century date preferably to an early tenth century one: ornamental profusion of the belts, *ūrudāmas* and pendants, the unnatural way the central fold of Śiva's *ardhoruka* curls upwards without being attached to the belt, the way the very elaborate folds of Pārvatī's *uttariya* curl as if by a dynamic flow, the curious halo-like design created by the upper part of the *uttariya* beyond the head of Pārvatī. The modelling is soft and classical, almost no more related to the over-emphatic modelling of Kashmiri torsos. Note the way the snake is worn as a *yajñopavīta*.

A stone Mahiṣāsura-mardini (Fig. 131) worshipped in the same Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex is similarly typical of Chamba; the stele can be dated to the eleventh or twelfth century although it already shows an inclination towards folkish interpretation. Another one, quite similar, is displayed in the Bhuri Singh Museum in Chamba town.

A brass Umā-Maheśvara (Fig. 132) with a modern Urdu inscription at the back of the base mentioning Sialkot as the place where the brass was kept is also related to Chamba although it could in fact have been cast either in Kangra, or west of Kangra in upper Punjab. The eyes are inlaid with electrum, Śiva has, as in the case of the Gaurī-Śaṅkara group and the Śiva Liṅga in Chhatradi, a rosary and a *mātulaṅga* in his lower pair of hands. But, it should be observed that the *mātulaṅga* is presently replaced by a conch and that the rear of Pārvatī's head is provided with the usual halo-like



Fig. 132b. Reverse of *Umā-Maheśvara*.

Fig. 131. *Mahiṣāsūramardinī*, Chamba, *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa* complex, one of the *devakūṭas*, No. 15, twelfth-thirteenth century. (Courtesy Prof. A. Neven.)

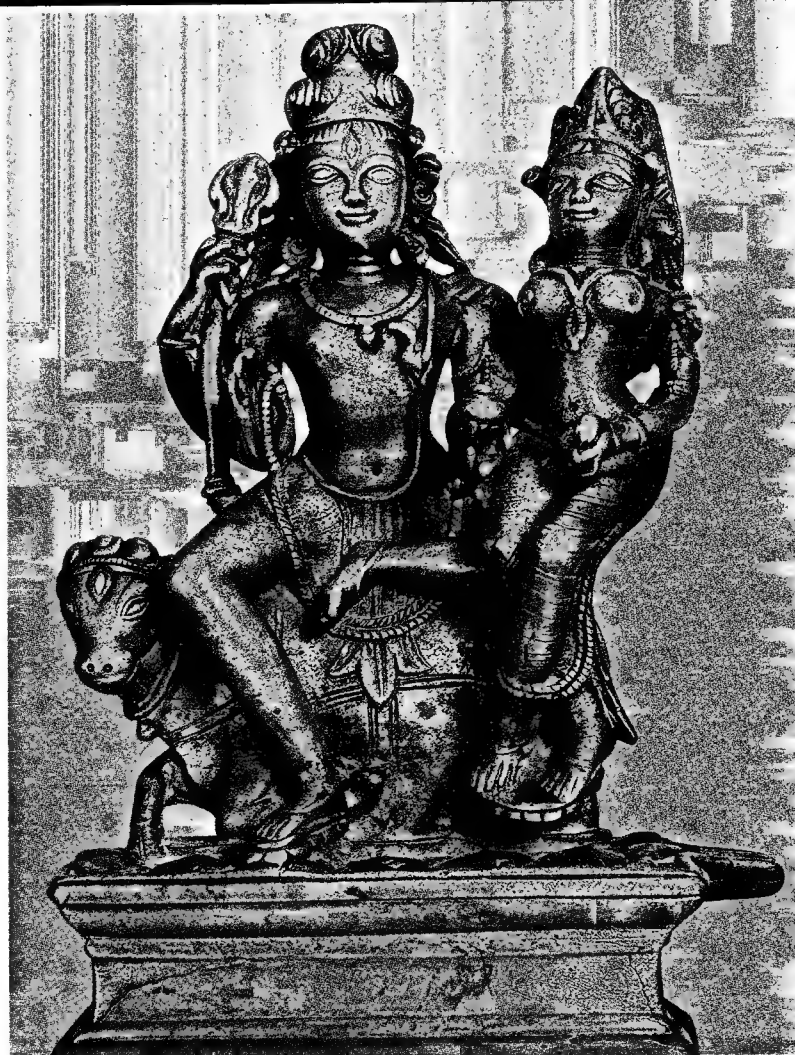


Fig. 132a. *Umā-Maheśvara*. Brass, 24 cm.

design of the *uttariya* which, oddly, is curtailed at the shoulder's level. Those two oddities point to an iconological deviation, and therefore also to a later date, possibly the late eleventh or even the twelfth century.

As already alluded to in the preceding chapter, there is a *Gaṇeśa* with a lion instead of the rat as vehicle on the door lintel of the miniature shrine of *Gaurī-Śaṅkara* in Jagatsukh (Kullu) (Fig. 123); the ears and the design of the *prabhā* tally with parallel details in Chamba, but a closer examination also reveals a striking similarity between the crown and the fold of the *ardhoruka* and those of the preceding brass.

To the eleventh or even the early twelfth century, we date the inner doorway to the sanctum of *Markulādevī* temple in Udaipur-Lahaul: these wood carvings display the aesthetical mannerism and academism of the late Lohara period in Kashmir.

The two huge panels on either side of the window are typical of an early folkish stage (Fig. 62). We are inclined to date them to the thirteenth century and slightly earlier than the brass "Royal Personage" of the Phiyang monastery in Ladakh (Singh, *Himalayan Art*, p. 129 and presently Fig. 133) which, although being obviously related to the Middle Sutlej by its *prabhā*, bears the long scarf or *patṭa* in the same way we can see in Udaipur's Markulā wood carvings.

A few more illustrations will show the complexity of the various late classical influences permeating Chamba and its neighbouring regions, such as Lahaul and Kangra.

A brass Durgā (Fig. 134), stylistically still very closely linked with the wood carvings of Udaipur, already displays the early folkish trend of the Kashmiri period; it even starts to deviate morphologically from the earlier prototypes, which makes

it possible for us to venture to date it to the early thirteenth century.

However, besides a Pratihāra influence, some brasses — their almost classical northern Uttar Pradesh stylistic and technical look notwithstanding — may be attributed to Chamba, because of such patterns as the high and narrow lotus pedestal, and, more particularly, the design of Garuḍa's wings, that is specific of Chamba (Figs. 135 to 138).

Other brasses display a more intricate mixture of the classical northern Uttar Pradesh and the more traditional Kashmiri related styles as in Figs. 138 and 139. In all these brasses, we note that the ringed mace has been replaced by the classical North Indian mace. But, a proper attribution to Chamba remains at present highly conjectural: in the case of some of them we can only surmise that they originated either in regions north of Chamba,

Fig. 133. *Dharmaśaṅkhasamādhi Mañjuśrī* (?). Brass, Phiyang Sgom. pa, Ladakh, Lahaul. Thirteenth century. This brass is a mixture of Chamba-Lahauli features (scarf) and small lotus pedestal in a general stylistic outlook that is proper to the Middle Sutlej (Nirmand).

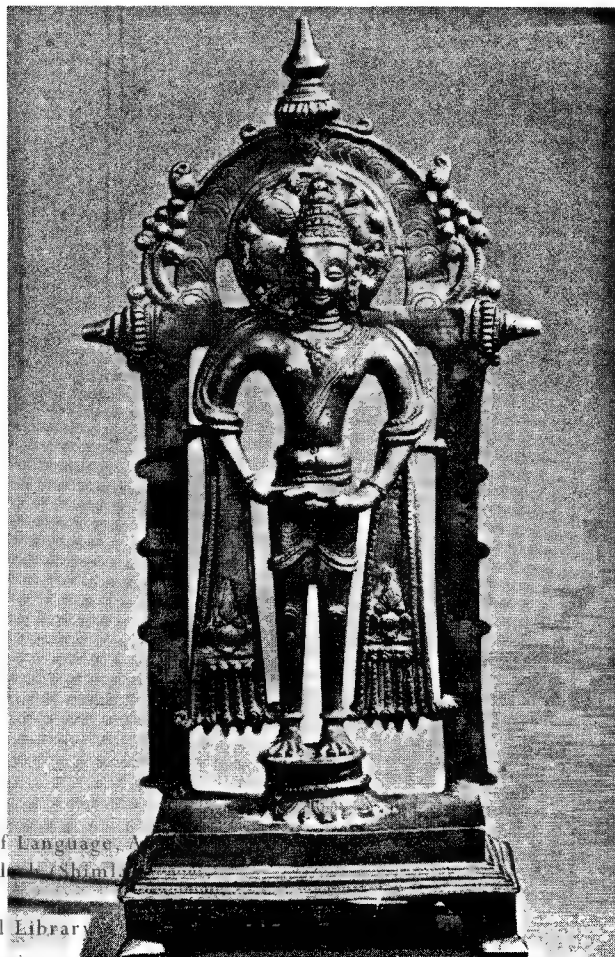


Fig. 134. *Durgā*. Brass, 24 cm. Chamba-Lahaul. Thirteenth century. A late classical or early folk brass of *Durgā*. Such a mandorla has already been discussed. Note the flower topping the ogive of the *prabhāvali* and the extremities of the scarf still reminiscent of the wood carvings of Udaipur. The crown is Kashmiri but the heavy upturned *kustis* are no longer morphologically coherent. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)

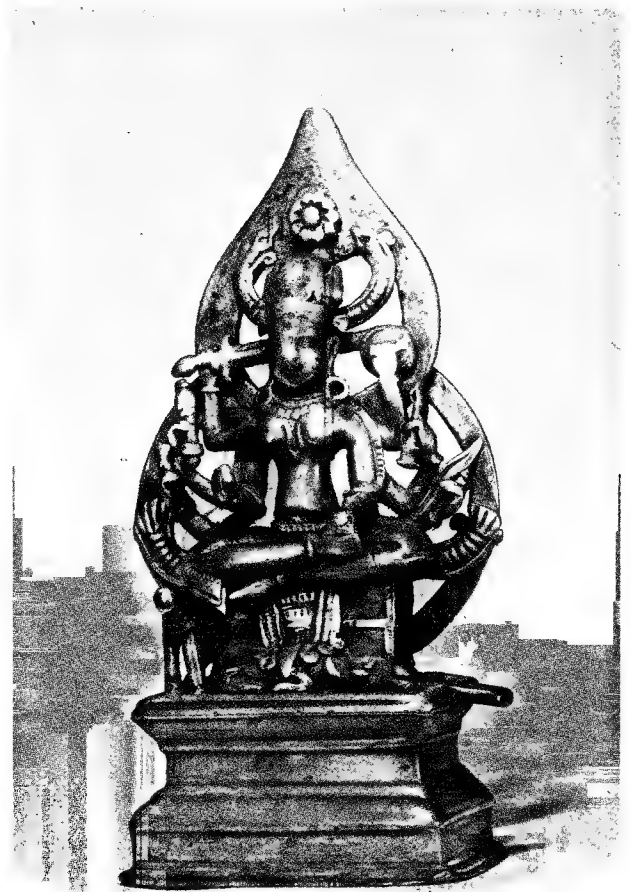


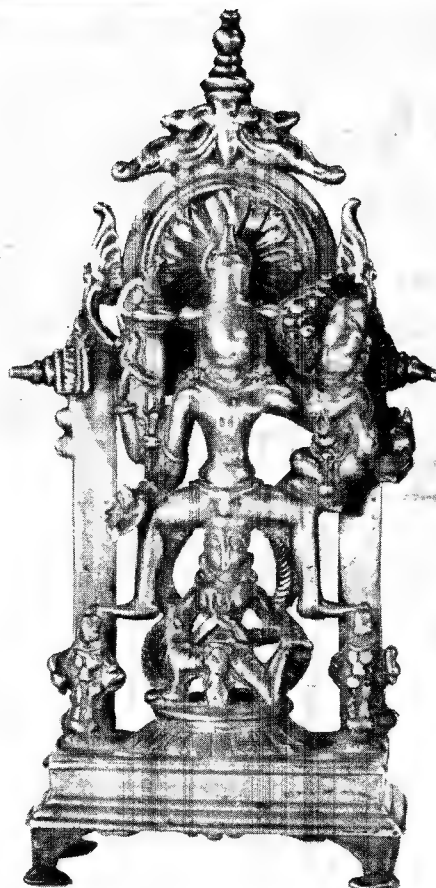


Fig. 136. *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa*. Brass, 28.5 cm. Chamba. Late twelfth or early thirteenth century. An almost similar much later production of the same subject as the previous one but obviously cast by a local artist. At this stage, we have to deal with a production lying in between classicism and its subsequent folkish interpretation. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)

that is Kangra, or possibly even Upper Punjab of which almost nothing is known due to the continuous vandalism perpetrated by the Ghaznavids and later Muslim rulers. We are equally ignorant of how the Kashmiri Hindu brasses of the later Lohara period until the establishment of Islam in that regions in the fourteenth century must have looked.

However, inclusion of those brasses in an enlarged geographic concept of Chamba seems to us quite a convenient provisional statement, until further research leads towards greater precision.

Fig. 135. Front and back views of *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa*. Brass, 21.5 cm. Chamba. Eleventh century. An almost classical brass from northern U.P. and technically related to the late *Pratīhāra* and *Katyūri* production that so deeply permeated the late classical and early folk style of the Middle Sutlej (*Nirmand*) as we discuss it in Chapter VIII. The only evidence that allows us to attribute this bronze, together with the three next ones, is the design of the wings of *Garuda* which is definitely particular to Chamba and Eastern Kashmir. But for a very few exceptions, the ringed mace has disappeared and been replaced by the classical mace as, in many brasses, all previous Kashmiri and Central Asiatic features have considerably receded through an



obvious reference to the later *Pratīhāra* classicism. Note how the lotus pedestal has been decentered in order to satisfy dissymmetry caused by *Lakṣmī* seated on *Nārāyaṇa*'s left thigh. It is not excluded that this brass might have been cast by an artist having migrated from U.P., as such moves have been frequently noticed in periods of political and economical troubles. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

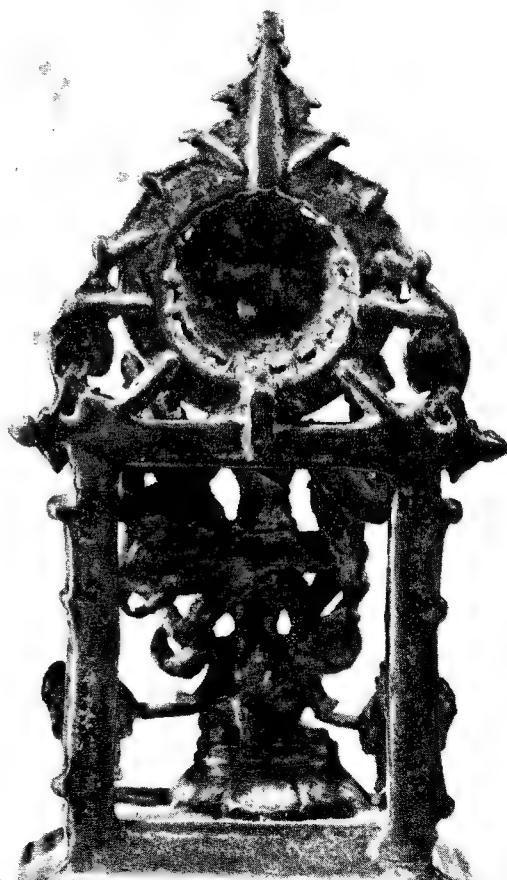


Fig. 138. Front and back views of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Brass, 19.7 cm. Chamba, eastern Kashmir or Upper Punjab. Eleventh century. Here again we have a late classical brass composed by a blend of Pratīhāra (mace), Kashmiri (crown), northern Kashmiri (petals of the lotus) and Chamba styles. Note how the spouting nāla of the pīṭha is coherently interpreted as a makara head, a feature currently observed in classical Indian stone temples. Once again we can refer to the stone prototype discussed in Fig. 120. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)





Fig. 137. Front and back views of *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa*. Brass, 28 cm. *Chhatradi*, Śaktidevī temple. Late thirteenth century or early fourteenth century. With this brass, the early folkish phase has been realised. The main stylistical link with the two previous brasses is still obvious although the ogive-pointed *prabhāvalī* topped by a flower, the most uncommon fluted pillars and capitals and the trefoiled arch are of local and Kashmiri influence. The back strikingly refers to the stone *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa* discussed in Fig. 120. Note how the lotus pedestal becomes more narrow and relatively higher.

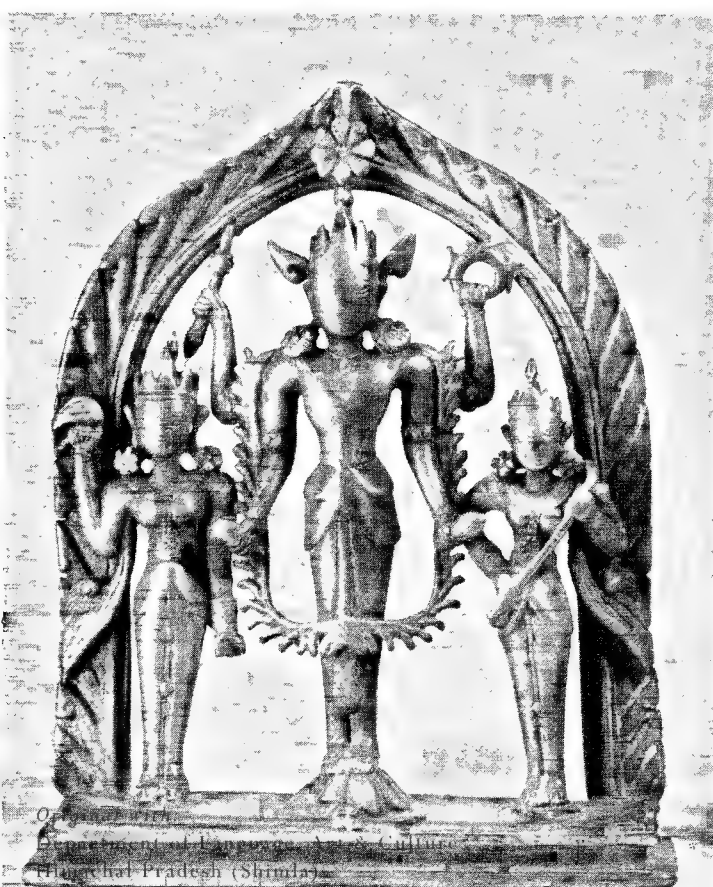


Fig. 139. *Viṣṇu* between *Lakṣmī*, and *Sarasvatī* playing on a *viṇā*. Brass, 12 cm. Upper Punjab (?). Thirteenth-fourteenth century. Faces have been overcarved. An atypical brass displaying a shift from classical to folkish production. The large ogive-pointed mandorla has a row of stylized flames most probably of a north-western Indian origin and of which some parallels can be seen in thirteenth century Western Tibetan bronzes. The inner moulding and the flower at the top are motives common to Himachal Pradesh. *Viṣṇu* stands on a narrow and high lotus pedestal typical of later classical and early folkish Chamba brasses, while a small figure of *Bhūdevī* appears in front of the pedestal. Crowns and long necklaces, wristbands and the garland, highly stylized in the way of herringbones, are also, although not exclusively, related to Chamba and adjacent southern countries. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



## THE POST-CLASSICAL PERIOD (Thirteenth to twentieth century)

WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT of Islam in North India, Chamba was cut off from its main cultural background as were so many other valleys of Himachal. While Kashmir was still to remain Hindu for two more centuries under the later Lohara dynasty (1101-1340), its political power was, however, on the wane.

Sporadic raids were made in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Chamba by unknown Muslim rulers of the Punjab, and much havoc and destruction was caused whereby most of the temples of Chamba were destroyed or at least severely damaged and subsequently rebuilt or restored so that only a few are still to be seen in their original state.

Hermann Goetz has devoted a critical study to this matter in his "Art of Chamba in the Islamic Period", *Journal of Oriental Institute*, Baroda, XI/2, 1962, in which he recognizes two main stylistic trends:

- (a) a classical tradition, which he labels "Imitative Mediaeval Style", beginning in the late fifteenth century, and classified into three phases: an Early Phase in the sixteenth century, a High Phase in the first half of the seventeenth century and a Late Phase in the second half of the seventeenth century which lasted up to the late eighteenth century;

- (b) a Folk style he dates from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century with a "Revival" in the second half of the seventeenth century.

This statement tallies with our own impressions advanced in the introductory part of this chapter, where we alluded to the steady adherence which Chamba shows to its classical idiom. As implied by Goetz, most probably the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were a period of such political and economic breakdown that almost nothing in particular could have possibly been created at that time except, perhaps, for a few stone sculptures in the late Pratihāra style that could be dated to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. But unlike Goetz, we believe that artistic activity did not come to a total and abrupt halt although it must have been considerably dimmed as it was elsewhere in Kullu and Nirmand, thus ensuring a stylistic link with a later classical revival.

The main characteristics of this period are:

- (1) a steady progress from the classical prototypes into morphological deviations;
- (2) with the exception of a very few cases, the ringed mace, so typical of Chamba, was abandoned for the northern type of mace;
- (3) big, bulbous, almond-shaped eyes with thick eyebrows;
- (4) as already described, the triangular ele-

- ments of the crown evolve into a higher, stereotyped design, progressing from a straight to a slightly curved shape;
- (5) the Kashmiri trefoiled arch evolves into a flattened structure that can often be placed above the figures without support from any column or pillar (Fig. 140).



Fig. 140.

### 1. THE EARLY POST-CLASSICAL PHASE (Thirteenth to Early Fifteenth Century)

We may attribute to the earliest productions of this period the oldest carvings and the *śikhara* of Baijnath in the Kangra valley which was founded in 1204, but was subsequently enlarged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and provided with new sculptures in a late Solanki-Gujarati style.

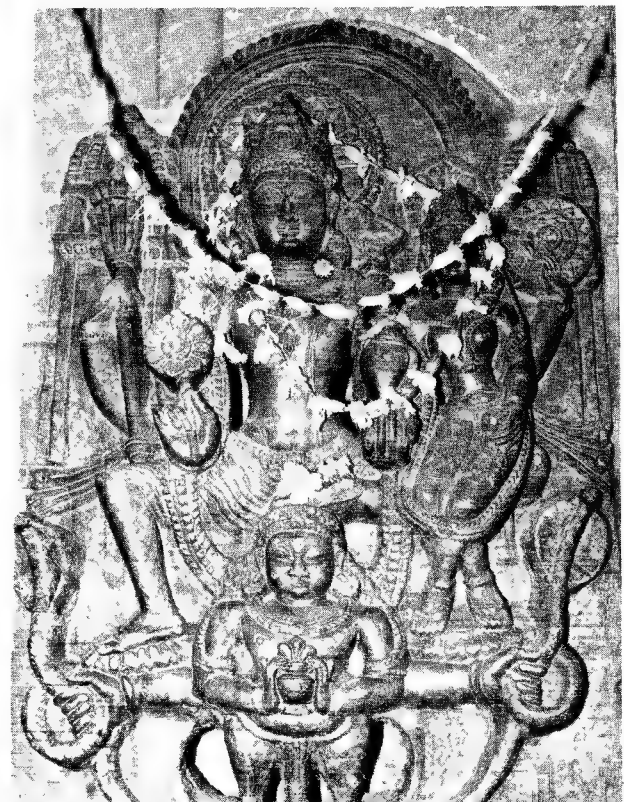
We may attribute to the early phase, that is to the early thirteenth century, the fluvial goddesses at the entrance to the sanctum (Fig. 30), the four-headed Mahādeva on the wall to the right of the entrance (Fig. 141) and most of the carvings in the *pañjaras* on the outer walls of the *śikhara*. The style of the fluvial goddesses mingles Kashmiri and Chamba features while the other sculptures have a greater affinity to the later Pratihāra trends.

In Chamba, in the western *pañjara* of the Lakṣmī-Dāmodara temple of the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex, there is an impressive Vaikunṭha which appears to be a mixture of the classical Chamba and Pratihāra styles (Fig. 142). Note the new design of the mace and, as in the case of the fluvial goddesses in Baijnath, the recurrence of a medallion over a crescent-shaped motif at the base of each element of the crown, thus combining the earlier Kashmiri crown with the classical three-pointed crown of Chamba. The eyes become bulbous and almond-shaped while the anatomical modelling, although dry and rigid, is treated in a more natural and classical way. The background is also characteristic of the late classical styles of the north-west India. Some stone carvings in Jagatsukh, such as Viṣṇu, whose crown only is reminiscent of Chamba, can be dated to about the same period.



Fig. 141. Four-headed Mahādeva. Baijnath temple, to the right of the sanctum. Early thirteenth century. A very uncommon form of Śiva combined with Durgā (recognizable by her attributes: sword, shield and bell) whose head surmounts the triple head of Śiva.

Fig. 142. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Western *pañjara* of the Lakṣmī-Dāmodara temple No. 13 of the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex in Chamba. Fourteenth-fifteenth century. Most probably earlier than the temple itself, which was built in the sixteenth century.



Again in Chamba, there is a *Vaikuṇṭhanātha* in a small shrine at the right of the entrance to the *Vajreśvarī* temple; it also is a mixture of the classical Chamba and *Pratīhāra* styles. The faces have been damaged and partially recarved later on, a feature that could point to a relatively early date as it seems to imply that the icon was already made when the Muslim raids took place in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, thus invalidating Goetz's hypothesis that nothing was produced in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. We know that the *Vajreśvarī* temple was reconstructed in the sixteenth century and can thus guess that the damaged *Vaikuṇṭha* was placed in a small separate shrine.

Some stone carvings like *Yamunā* inserted in the masonry of the enclosure wall of the *Baijnath* temple and three stone figures worshipped in *Sarsai* (Kullu) (Fig. 143) are of a later date, possibly the thirteenth century. The late Kashmiri style predominates here but has now evolved into stiff and stereotyped attitudes with heavy limbs and protruding eyes. We are tempted to assign a stone *Vaikuṇṭha* now kept in the *Bhuri Singh* Museum in Chamba to the fourteenth or even the fifteenth century at the latest (Fig. 144). This work seems to be semi-folkish style copy of an earlier Kashmiri prototype of the *Kārkoṭa* period (eight-ninth century) and can be compared in this respect to the *Vaikuṇṭha* of *Verinag* and others now displayed in the *Srinagar* Museum. While the crown can obviously be traced back to a much earlier Kashmiri work, the emphasis on the heavy locks of hair of both *Viṣṇu* and *Garuḍa* and the spotted wings constitutes a new feature, although such locks of hair are typical of many late classical Buddhist bronzes of Western Himachal Pradesh.

## 2. THE LATER POST-CLASSICAL PHASE (Late Fifteenth to Eighteenth Century)

The late fifteenth and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were marked in Chamba as well as in the whole of Himachal Pradesh by a revival, both economic and political: temples were rebuilt or enlarged, new ones were founded and new stylistic impulses such as Mughal patterns were imported from northern India and, above all, Rajput and late Solanki features, more obviously evident in the carvings of the *maṇḍapa* of the *Baijnath* temple, were introduced from Rajasthan and Gujarat —

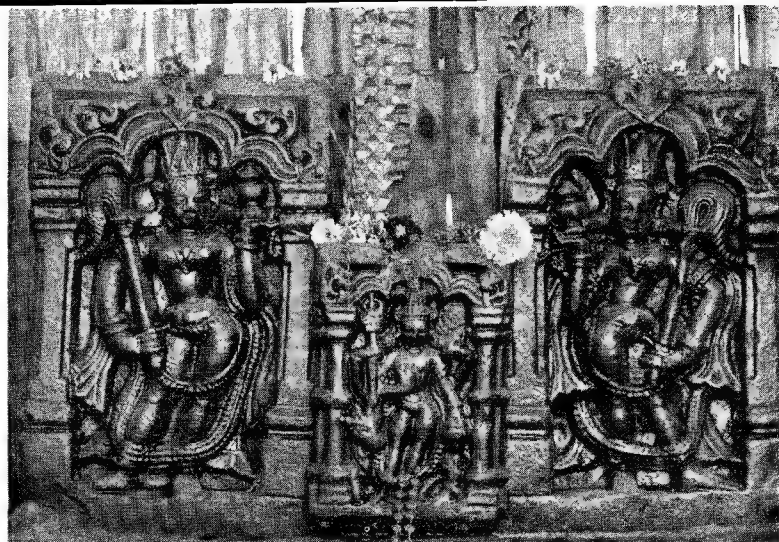


Fig. 143. *Sarsai, Kullu.*

- (a) The Chamba-*Pratīhāra* tradition continued in stone carvings such as those of the *Hidimbā* temple in *Mehla* dating to the third quarter of the seventeenth century (Fig. 145). While these works are still iconographically fully coherent, the background of these steles shows an obvious deviation from, and re-interpretation of the classical *Pratīhāra* pattern. We may attribute to this same tradition the two huge wooden *dvār-apālas* of the *Markulādevī* temple in *Udaipur* (Lahaul) (Fig. 71) which could be dated to the third quarter of the sixteenth century when the temple was restructured.

We date to the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries similar carvings that were inserted on the outer walls of several of the newly rebuilt or erected temples of the *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa* complex in Chamba, and also some of the carvings that were placed in the outside niches of the *śikhara* in *Baijnath*.

- (b) The Chamba-Solanki tradition is most evident in *Baijnath* and to such an extent that some of these carvings could be even attributed to Gujarati or South Rajasthani workmanship of the sixteenth to seventeenth century except for the crowns which still adhere to the fashion of Chamba. Their triangular elements clearly tend to curve outwards. The round smiling faces are typical, with a stereotyped smile, elongated eyes with moulded upper eyelids, prominent and finely carved eyebrows, a heavy *vanamālā* consisting of three parallel rows either plain or studded, but no longer reminiscent of flower garlands. Both iconography and iconology undergo consider-





Fig. 144. *Vaikunṭhanātha*. Stone. Chamba. Fourteenth-fifteenth century. Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba.

Fig. 145. *Durgā*. *Hidimbā* temple, Mehla, Chamba. Late seventeenth century.



able deviations and interpretations so much so that the function of these carvings becomes mundane and merely ornamental, devoid of any religious feeling. Gaṇeśa, depicted on the outer left door-jamb of the entrance to the *maṇḍapa*, even has his nipples haloed with beads as nipples are so often treated in Gujarat (Fig. 27). It should be observed that his vehicle, in this case also, is a lion. His crown, too, corresponds to the fashion of Chamba and his ears are representative of the last stage of schematization of this anatomical part specific to Gaṇeśa.

The same observations can be made about several stone carvings and panels of the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex in Chamba, though the faces are treated in an even more stereotyped and systematic way as displayed in the group of Veṇugopāla with Rati and Pradyumna on the western wall of the Radha-Krishna temple built in 1828, thus showing how this late classical tradition came to an end in the early nineteenth century by merging with a folkish style (Fig. 146).

In one of the small shrines built against the western enclosure of the same group of temples is a stone stele of Caturānana carved in a style that is quite reminiscent of that of Mandi in the sixteenth century (Fig. 147).

### BRASSES

Unlike in the eastern part of Himachal Pradesh where brass icons continued to be cast even after the twelfth century, it seems that an interruption in metal casting characterizes the post-classical period in Chamba from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. In this respect, Goetz's statement about a blank period could be right and it was perhaps only in the sixteenth century that the casting of Hindu icons recommenced.

#### (a) *The Classical Trend*

One of the oldest metal images of this period is the bronze (?) Ādinātha in Kangra fort which is dated 1466 A.D. (published in Goverdhan Singh's *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, Pl. CIII, a) but, due to its orthodox canon, it is of little stylistic interest.



Fig. 146. *Veṅṅopāla* group. Radha-Krishna temple No. 6 in the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex, Chamba. Ca 1830. The temple was built in 1828 and the stone panel inserted in the wall before the erection of the two front pillars of the pañjara. Although it may have been transferred from a more ancient building, we admit it dates to the building of the temple 1828.

Fig. 147. *Caturāṇana* of the devakoṣṭha No. 15 of the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex, Chamba. Seventeenth-eighteenth century.



The earliest datable brass is that of Markulādevī in Udaipur (Lahaul) (*ibid.* Pl. CIV, a), ca 80 cm. in height. It dates to the middle of the sixteenth century and is a folkish interpretation of, probably, several classical prototypes: the ringed mace makes its last appearance here and the dress combines fashions from Uttar Pradesh and Chamba. Although obviously folkish in appearance, this brass is of striking archaism and one could even be tempted to define it as a work of archaeological syncretism. As is often the case in Chamba, the eyes are inlaid with electrum. A still later brass of Durgā riding a lion is under worship in the Hiḍimbā temple in Mehla (Fig. 148). The inscription on the collar of the lion mentions the name of the donor, Baṭulā, wet nurse of Prithvi Singh, who ordered the temple to be built in the third quarter of the seventeenth century (see the chapter on Inscriptions). Once again, we have a monumental brass referring to the classical taste.

The two Garuḍas topping the *stambhas* respectively facing the entrance to the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex (Fig. 149) and the Lakṣmī-Dāmodara temple in the same complex can be dated to the sixteenth-seventeenth century and similarly carry on the classical tradition, except that they are four-handed and have as attributes (clockwise from the upper left) a snake, a pot, a rosary and a club topped by a jug.

A small brass Durgā, similar to the one in Mehla, but wearing a *colī* with short sleeves, is in the Bhuri Singh Museum in Chamba (Fig. 150); it can be dated to the late seventeenth or even the eighteenth century and reveals the same classical taste veering towards greater realism, a trend that characterizes a few brasses of Chamba with supple modelling and round heads, some specimens of which can also be ascribed to Kullu. This realistic trend ended in the late nineteenth or the early twentieth century with a small standing Śiva in the Bhuri Singh Museum (Fig. 151). Besides its realism, this brass shows a comprehensive adherence to the classical prototypes in the way the snake is classically used as the sacrificial thread and the armlets put high above the elbows.

A small copy of the Gaurī-Śaṅkara group ca 50 cm. in height under worship in a small shrine facing the Candragupta temple in the Lakṣmī-



Fig. 148. Durgā. Brass. Hidimbā temple, Mehla, Chamba. Third quarter of the seventeenth century.

Fig. 149. Garuda. Embossed copper, on the pillar facing the entry of the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex. Chamba. Sixteenth-seventeenth century.



Fig. 150. Durgā. Brass. Chamba. Late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. (Courtesy Bhuri Singh Museum.)

Fig. 151. Śiva. Brass. Chamba. Late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. (Courtesy Bhuri Singh Museum.)



Fig. 152. Small Gauri-Śankara group. Brass, ca 50 cm., Chamba. Twentieth century. One of the small shrines No. 8 of the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex, Chamba.



Nārāyaṇa complex is typical of this production which adheres to the classical prototypes (Fig. 152). It is said to have been cast locally in 1955, but another informant told us that it was formerly under worship in Khadamukh and was installed in the present shrine upon recovery after having been stolen.

(b) *The Folkish Brasses*

(1) *The Classical Trend*

Judging from the morphological deviations of the *prabhās* and from details such as the curve of the elements of the crowns, we may surmise that this style started from the fifteenth-sixteenth century onwards and underwent an evolution quite parallel to that of the classical tradition, except for its realism.

The small brass Durgā in the Bhuri Singh Museum (Chamba) could be dated to the sixteenth century and its *prabhā* with stylized *makara* heads protruding on the side is typical of many *prabhās* that were installed around large icons in shrines in the sixteenth and seventeenth century (Figs. 153 and 102, 14E).

A standing Narasimha could possibly be attributed to an eighteenth or nineteenth century Chamba workshop as its eyes are inlaid with electrum—a practice that seems typical of the valley, though not exclusive (Fig. 154). The moustached grin of the lion is a feature common to the whole of Himachal Pradesh.

A four-headed Brahmā (Fig. 155), also with inlaid eyes and nipples, depicts the dry stiffness and definite loss of technical skill which, besides iconographic oddities, characterizes twentieth century production, since genuine casters no more work at present in the traditional way. One would be tempted to incriminate a kind of acculturation resulting from a symbiosis with European fashions and values. Such a statement could be true only within the last few decades and restricted only to such important places of Chamba, Kullu, Manali, Manikarn and Mandi where tourism has set into motion an irreversible cultural degradation, but could hardly be applicable to remote villages where casters are nowadays no more to be found.

Among this classical and realistic trend we isolate a particular group of brass icons, the provenance of



Fig. 153. Durgā. Brass. Chamba. Sixteenth seventeenth century. Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. (Courtesy Bhuri Singh Museum.)



Fig. 154. Narasimha. Brass, approx. 18 cm., Chamba. Nineteenth-twentieth century.

Fig. 155. Front and back views of Brahmā. Brass, approx. 25 cm., Chamba. Twentieth century.





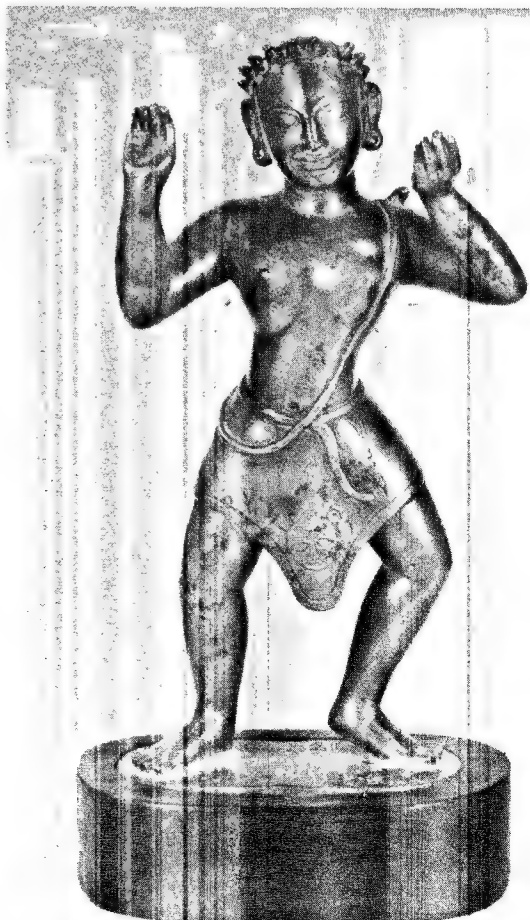
which is still unknown but might be from an area adjacent to the south of Chamba, perhaps Kangra. This group is characterized by:

- a round, “bald” head;
- a thick nose;
- big, fish-shaped, protruding eye-balls;
- small, rounded, prominent chin;
- large, projecting ears, the upper part hollow, the lobes thick and hypertrophied, and pierced with a neat, small, round hole;
- hands almost small, with fingers appearing glued together;
- heavy limbs and torso and large, rounded shoulders and chest;
- a supple modelling, despite the rigid and hieratic attitude and look;

Fig. 156. Unidentified couple. Brass. Kangra (?). Modern period, eighteenth-nineteenth century (?). Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. (Courtesy Bhuri Singh Museum.)

Fig. 157. Front and back views of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī. Brass, approx. 12 cm. Kangra (?). Eighteenth-nineteenth century (?). (Private collection.)

Fig. 158. Dancing Śiva. Brass, 28.5 cm. Kangra (?). Eighteenth-nineteenth century (?). The theme of a two-armed dancing Śiva is specific to Kangra and Guler painting in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The dancing deity is clad in a tiger's skin and crowned. He has, as sacrificial cord, a snake so long that its tail acts as a belt while its head projects over the left shoulder. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)





— accessories such as ornaments, jewels and dress are sparsely suggested and reduced to quite an essential semiotic function (see Figs. 156 to 158).

## (2) The Folkish Trend

Icons of an authentic and specific folkish style are to be seen in the shrines in Bharmaur and elsewhere. Their main characteristics are their elongated slender limbs and up-tilted heads, somewhat reminiscent of the protohistoric Aegean marble idols, with protruding eyes, a pointed chin, and a low forehead (Fig. 159). The animals have a flattened snout. Any attempt to date them seems premature, although we believe them to be quite recent, not older than the nineteenth century. However, all of them express a genuine original folkish strength and static dynamics.

Of a related folk style but a still rougher workmanship, are a few brasses we have come across, characterized by extremely slim and long limbs, eyes inlaid with electrum and a dark brown patina. The base is almost flat and provided with very simple legs. To date them seems premature, as we have to deal with the following alternatives:

Fig. 161. *Yogeśvara* (?). Brass. Chamba. Nineteenth-twentieth century. Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. (Courtesy Bhuri Singh Museum.)



Fig. 160. *Śiva and Durgā on their vehicles*. Brass. Chamba. Nineteenth century. Maṇimakeśa temple, Bharmaur. (Courtesy ASI.)

Fig. 162. *Kālī*. Brass. Chamba. Nineteenth-twentieth century. Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. (Courtesy Bhuri Singh Museum.)





Fig. 164. Yogeśvara. Brass, approx. 15 cm. Chamba. Eighteenth-nineteenth century (?).

Fig. 165. Vaṭuka Bhairava (?) with two dogs. Brass or bronze, eyes inlaid with electrum, 28 cm. Chamba. Prior to nineteenth century. Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena, California. (Courtesy Norton Simon Foundation.)



Fig. 159.

Fig. 166. Viṣṇu Śeṣāśāyin. Brass or bronze, eyes inlaid with electrum, 19 cm. Chamba. Prior to nineteenth century (?). Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena, California. (Courtesy Norton Simon Foundation.)

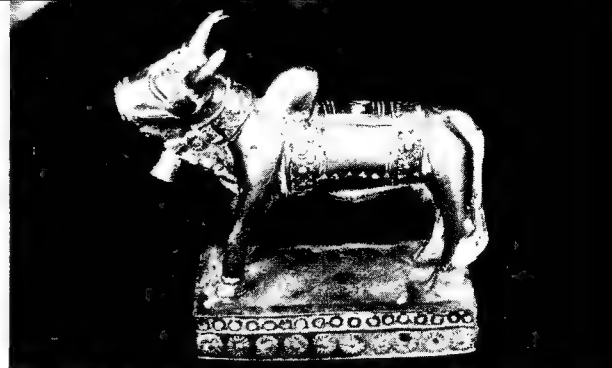
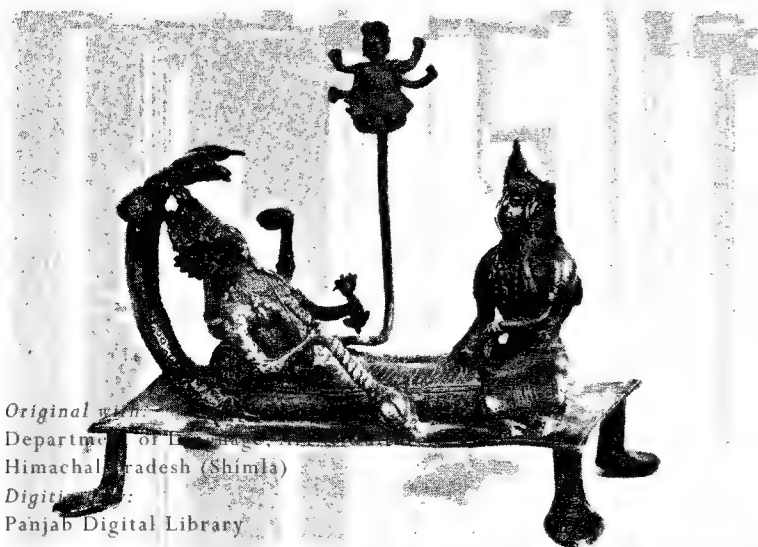


Fig. 163. Nandi. Brass. Chamba. Nineteenth-twentieth century. Maṇimahēśa temple, Bharmaur. (Courtesy ASI.)

- either they antedate the previous production of the folkish style and are then prior to the nineteenth century;
- or they are purely local productions (the exact provenance of which is still unknown), more or less contemporary with the previous group.

The Yogeśvara illustrated in Fig. 164 might constitute a possible and plausible link between the two groups: if this proves to be true, then we have to admit the first alternative, according to which this particular group antedates the modern one depicted in Figs. 160 to 163.

### (3) Bengali Brasses

A few brass Kālī icons in a nineteenth-twentieth century style, with a long protruding tongue, imported from Bengal rather than locally modelled on Bengali prototypes, have been sporadically observed in Chamba. Locally cast or embossed plates with Kālī in the Bengali style have also been seen in other places such as the Kangra valley (between Mandi and Jogindernagar), Mandi (Cāmundā ratha of Drang) and Kullu. This import could be linked to the evidence of Tantric cults imported from Bengal such as those of Chinnamastakā and Mahātārā or Mahācīnātārā whose figures are depicted in early nineteenth century Kangra and Guler miniatures.

Fig. 167. Śiva, Umā and Gaṇeśa with their vehicles. Bronze or brass, eyes inlaid with electrum, approx. 12 cm. (Private collection.)



## METAL TORSOS IN CHAMBA

ALTHOUGH *MOHRAS* ARE neither made nor worshipped in the Chamba valley or in the western part of Himachal, we have some evidence of the worship of torsos in Chamba. One is the famous bust of the so-called "Śujunīdevī" discovered by Shuttleworth at the Nirmand Bhunda festival of 1919, of which a separate account appears in this book. A fresh reading of the inscription gives the name as either Śujunī- or Śujanīdevī and dates it to the second year of an unknown century of the Śāstra-Laukika era which almost surely, as discussed separately and previously, corresponds to 1026 A.D. It is also, both in style and workmanship, directly linked to the brass Gaurī-Śaṅkara group of the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple complex in Chamba town, a group that was cast in the early eleventh century.

The bust of Śujunīdevī—the name might be an altered form—so the inscription reads, could be the portrait of a deified queen ordered to be made by the queen (*priyā*) of the king Hemaparakāśa. The work, a masterpiece of Indian art, has indeed all the liveliness of an actual portrait. It is cast in brass, with traces of electrum inlay along the eyelids, and is 35 cm. in height (Fig. 168).

A very curious feature occurs on the frontal element of the crown where the big cabochon was substituted for another ornamental part on the wax

model itself, as can be clearly seen in the rear, where a hole was first cut in the wax before the newly designed and actual cabochon was inserted (Fig. 169). This suggests a last minute modification before the casting process, as if, for example, there was a deviation from a former decision to fit a real cabochon on the final brass model.

The Śujunī bust is not only an impressive work of art, but also a chronological milestone as its inscription permits inference of a precise date. As discussed in detail in the chapter on Inscriptions, the palaeography tallies with the date of 1026 and the week day, Tuesday, also corresponds to the 12th July of that year.

When compared to the large Gaurī-Śaṅkara group, the Śujunī bust obviously appears to be closely related to it in every minute detail. Hence we may safely assign both these works to a time span of one generation, and we are inclined to attribute them to the same artist, dating the Gaurī-Śaṅkara group a few years earlier than the Śujunī bust.

Until now, the Gaurī-Śaṅkara group was believed to have been cast in the second quarter of the tenth century, at about the time or shortly after the town of Chamba was founded by Sāhilavarman. It must now be dissociated from this historical event



Fig. 168. Bust of Śujunīdevī. Brass, 35 cm. Dated 1026 A.D. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand.

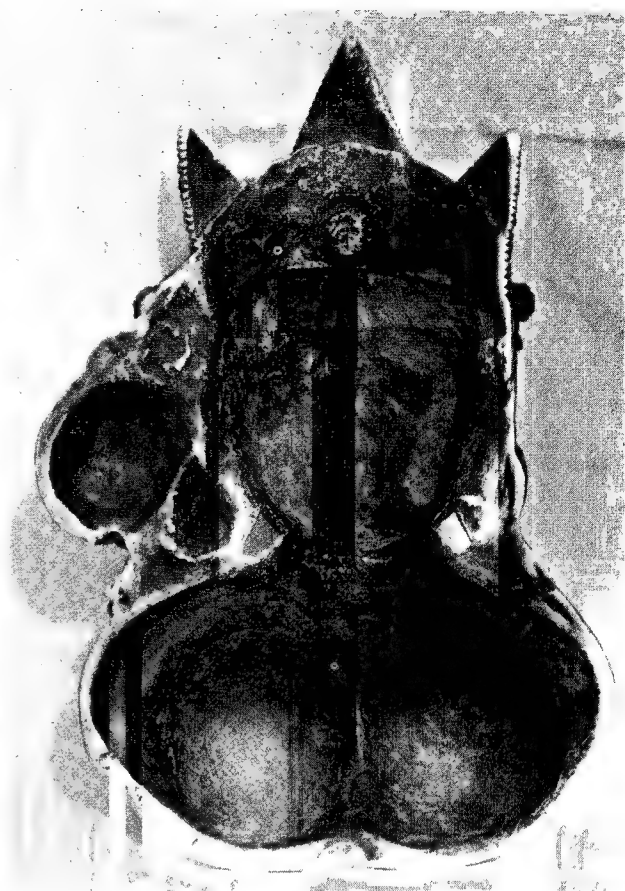


Fig. 169. Back view of the same.

and be post-dated by at least sixty years to agree with the Śujunī date of 1026.

How the Śujunī bust came to Nirmand we do not know. (One informant at Nirmand told us that he heard from his grandfather that the bust was presented to the Paraśurāma temple by a Rana of Spiti, but this was denied by another informant.) The fact is that no one in Nirmand knew about the existence of this work until it came to light by chance for the first time in 1919.

The Chamba Museum exhibits a conical *liṅga* cover on which the crowned face of Śiva appears in a late classical Pratihāra style of the late eleventh or the twelfth century (Fig. 170). The eyes were originally inlaid with electrum. The crown is, however, of a design that was specific to Viṣṇu during Period II.

Of a more folkish workmanship but still very close up to a certain point, both stylistically and chronologically, to the Śujunī bust, is a bust of a Devī, 27.5 cm. in height (Fig. 171). This work bears all the characteristics of Chamba's style in the design of the crown, the necklaces with a crossed central motif and a long string of pearls that falls between the breasts. It is even tempting to perceive a folkish interpretation of the Śujunī bust in this work. The date could range between the late eleventh and the thirteenth century.

A still vivid tradition of Chamba recounts that when Sāhilavarman moved his capital from Bharmaur to Chamba in about 920, it was found that water was scarce in the tableland on which the new town had been built. It was then suggested that the king should sacrifice his own daughter Campāvatī to propitiate the chthonian genii to supply the



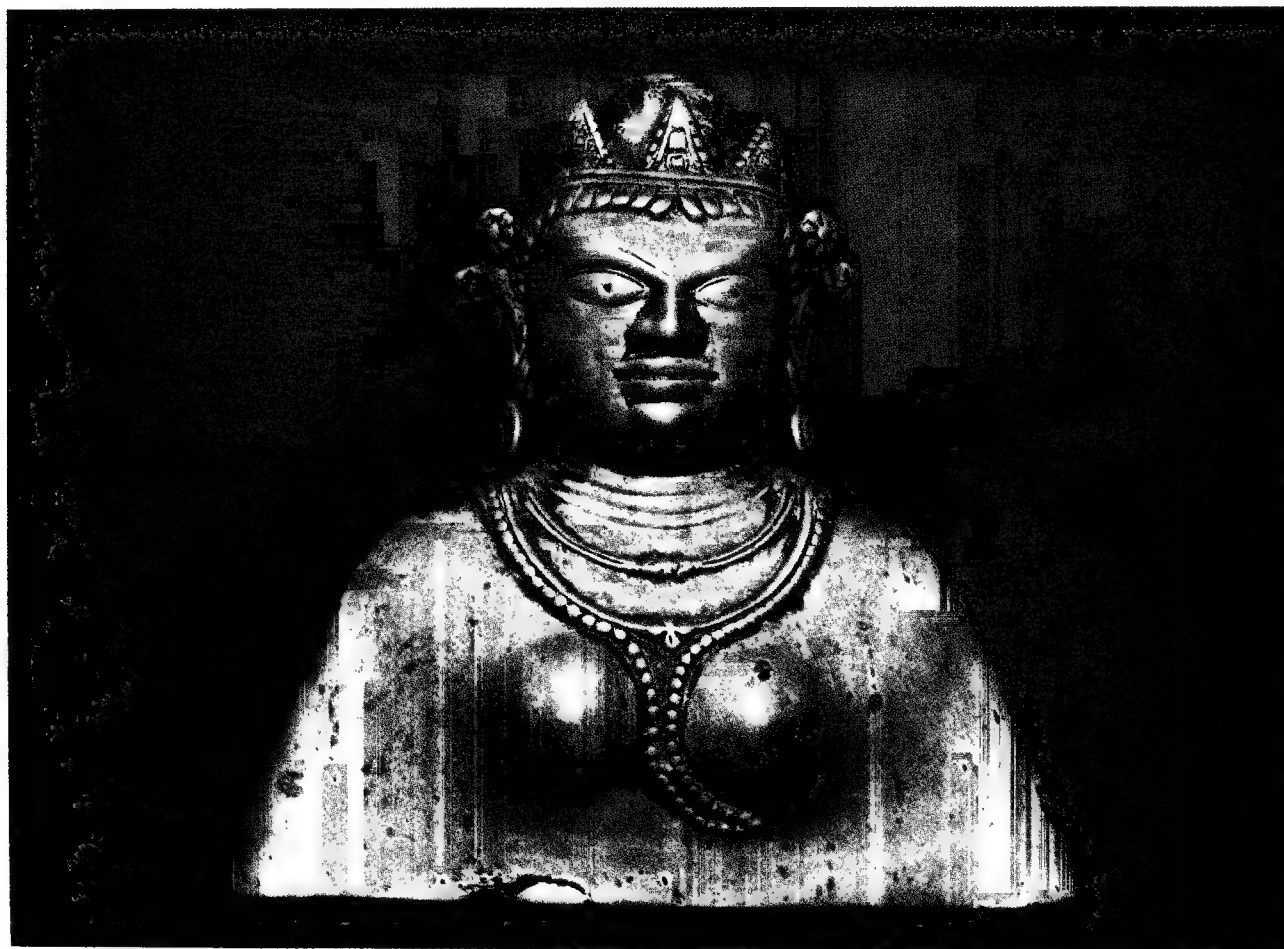


Fig. 170. Liṅga cover with face of Śiva. Bronze or brass, eyes were once inlaid with electrum. Chamba. Eleventh-twelfth century. Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. (Courtesy Bhuri Singh Museum.)

city with water. Campāvātī had thus to be buried alive near the well but her mother, the queen Nennādevī, interceded so as to be substituted for her daughter and got herself buried.

Near the well where water (still scarce!) is collected, on a slope north of Chamba town, there is still a small shrine rebuilt in the eighteenth or nineteenth century dedicated to Suī or Suhīdevī, where a fair is held every year to commemorate the sacrifice of Nennādevī, also named Suī or Suhī. A crudely cast brass bust of a three-eyed Devī is worshipped in the shrine. It is about 40 cm. in height and consists of a head and a bell-shaped chest plate that neatly caps a conical stone.

Fig. 171. Bust of Devī. Brass, 27.5 cm. Chamba. Twelfth-thirteenth century. (Courtesy Mr. M. Postel.)





The bust of Suhīdevī appears to be a late work of the sixteenth-seventeenth century or even later (Fig. 172).

Who Śujunīdevī was is still unknown, but some evidence might relate her with the sacrificed queen of Sāhilavarman, Nennādevī, although all this remains purely conjectural: the phonetic association between Śujunīdevī and Suhīdevī, who is still worshipped in Chamba under the aspect of a torso that could be a late copy of a previous one, might, of course, be accidental. But the fact is that Suhīdevī presently depicts the sacrificed queen Nennādevī who could have been afterwards deified under the name of Śujunī, which might be another name of Nennā.

Another female bust, ca 20 cm. in height, can also be traced back to the Śujunī torso but seems to be of a much later date, perhaps as late as the fifteenth or sixteenth century, although both the attribution to Chamba and the date remain conjectural in the actual state of knowledge (Fig. 173).

We were informed that upon seeing this torso, Stella Kramrisch, who has travelled extensively in these parts of the Western Himalaya, said she had seen similar torsos simply placed against a small earthen tumulus or funeral mound. This gives additional credit to the tradition that some *mohras* and torsos had a circumstantial funeral function.

Fig. 172. Bust of Suhīdevī. Brass, ca 40 cm. Chamba. Sixteenth-seventeenth century. Shrine of Suhīdevī, Chamba. The bust caps a conical stone inserted in a flattened tumulus which suggests a link with a funerary ritual.



Fig. 173. Female bust. Bronze or brass, ca 20 cm. Chamba (?). Fifteenth-sixteenth century (?). (Private collection.)



## THE EASTERN GROUP (MIDDLE SUTLEJ)

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

#### 1. THE CLASSICAL TRADITION AND SOURCES (Tenth to Thirteenth Century)

PROCEEDING NOW EASTWARDS, we meet a cultural and artistic sphere which considerably differs from that of Chamba or the western part of our field of investigation. To summarize, although that eastern part of Himachal Pradesh displays a well-defined cultural unity, so much in the production and evolution of brass icons as in that of masks or *mohras*, we can distinguish between three main stylistical currents geographically divided by the hydrological systems of the Sutlej and the Beas:

- (1) The middle Sutlej group ranging in an east-west axis from Rampur and even Sarahan down to Baragaon where the river begins to bend southwards. This first group can further be divided into the Nirmand and the Nirath sub-groups.
- (2) The Beas group extending in a north-south axis mainly along the Kullu valley, that is between Manali and Mandi.
- (3) The Cis-Sutlej group of the former Simla Hills States which mixes stylistical characteristics of the two first groups.

From its considerable size as a hill village, we may infer that Nirmand must have been a commercial centre of some importance in Eastern Himachal Pradesh long before small cities such as Mandi, Rampur, Bilaspur and others gained fame. Historical as well as archaeological evidence points to the fact that already in the sixth century Nirmand en-

joyed a privileged status amongst the hills and no doubt soon became a centre of both commercial and cultural exchanges, from where newly imported fashions and stylistic trends spread to neighbouring small villages, cities and feudal states. It is to Nirmand that bulk of Indian influence came from the south-east, mainly from Uttar Pradesh, before moving further westward to the Kullu valley where it encountered and mingled with western trends from Chamba-Lahaul and Kashmir. Also significant is the fact that most of the classical and early folkish *mohras*, cast as well as silver embossed, are kept in Nirmand and in various temples in its neighbourhood, such as Bail, Khekhu, Behena, Kasholigad.

Unfortunately, however, only little evidence of this former cultural and artistic wealth is still to be found in Nirmand proper; we were told that the people of Nirmand have, due to an economical crisis, sold many of their brass icons during 1965 and 1975, while still others were stolen recently, but to judge from what is still retained in the Parasurāma temple *bhandar*, one may assume that Nirmand, as a former cultural centre, must have once produced and kept the finest of early folkish bronzes.

In Kullu, on the other hand, we were more fortunate in isolating a purely local folkish style,

due to the fact that some specimens of it are still *in situ*, and the latest of them do indeed dovetail with the later folkish evolution of wood carvings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What we have termed "the Beas style" is based on firm grounds and to this we add the fact that it shares, at least episodically, a few western stylistic features with Chamba and Kashmir that are more rarely observed in the Middle Sutlej where, on the contrary, eastern influences have been predominant. And, as this eastern trend prevails everywhere in the Middle, the Cis-Sutlej and the Beas, we decided logically, although it may still be conjectural and by no way definite, to proceed with our study on this eastern part of Himachal Pradesh, from east to west, focusing mainly on Nirmand as the centre from where this eastern style must have spread.

However, we must insist on the fact, and this is more particularly true for the Cis-Sutlej group, that one seldom comes across a clear stylistic delineation between these different groups, as each of the two main currents, that is, those of the Middle Sutlej and the Beas, permeates the other. We would warn the reader that while the total overall trend of stylistic classification might be valid, many particulars are still conjectural and have to be taken as an initial and tentative approach to the subject.

Chronologically, we can also divide this matter into three main periods:

- (1) A classical and late classical period ending with the dawn of the thirteenth century and during which the main artistic stream came from northern Uttar Pradesh with only episodic Kashmiri intrusions.
- (2) A post-classical folkish period ranging from the thirteenth century to the late fifteenth century.
- (3) A modern folkish renewal starting in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century up to the present century.

A large number of classical brasses ranging chronologically from the tenth to the early thirteenth century have been attributed differently to Punjab, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh or Uttar Pradesh. Although almost nothing is known of brasses of the late Pratihara and the Katyuri styles of Uttar Pradesh and Kumaon, these brasses may well be assigned to the northern part of Uttar Pradesh by a

process of elimination as they are obviously not from Punjab, nor from western India, nor from central and eastern India of which the styles are better known. This leaves only the northern part of Uttar Pradesh as their homeland and, further, morphologically they appear similar to the few northern Uttar Pradesh stone sculptures that escaped Islamic fury. Stylistically, also, many of them share a mixture of patterns from western and eastern India.

A sizeable group of such brasses is still in the possession of the Paraśurāma temple in Nirmand. We were informed that they were even more numerous some twenty years ago when dealers started rifling them in Nirmand and other neighbouring villages and that even now some are concealed in private shrines.

Among the innumerable examples of this classical style available in various collections, icons of Viṣṇu predominate by about 50%, closely followed by those of Gaṇeśa (most icons of him are said to have originated in Nirmand or still exist there), with a few Śiva-Umāśahita and Durgā Maḥiśāsura-mardīnī icons. In Nirmand, we saw only one icon of Viṣṇu, one of Umāśahita Śiva, one of Maḥiśāsura-mardīnī but six of Gaṇeśa. Among these prototypes, Maḥiśāsura-mardīnī achieved a high degree of popularity in later folk art as she obviously became the *prima inter pares* of the Himachal pantheon and religion so much involved with Śaktism.

Setting aside for the moment the iconography of these classical brasses of Uttar Pradesh, let us attempt a synthesis of the various basic features into which the elements of the base and the rear structures combine themselves as summarized in Fig. 174:

- (1) The base or *pīṭha* may be either of the western plain type (1), with or without mouldings, with a slightly concave lower plinth, or supported on simply designed feet (2); the feet may also be more or less profiled (3,4,5). Often, an inverse triangular design appears in the centre (3,4,5).
- (2) The pilasters are either plain (1,2) and form a cylindrical vault (1) if they are not interrupted (3) or terminated (2,4) by the horizontal cross-bar above the seat. Often the

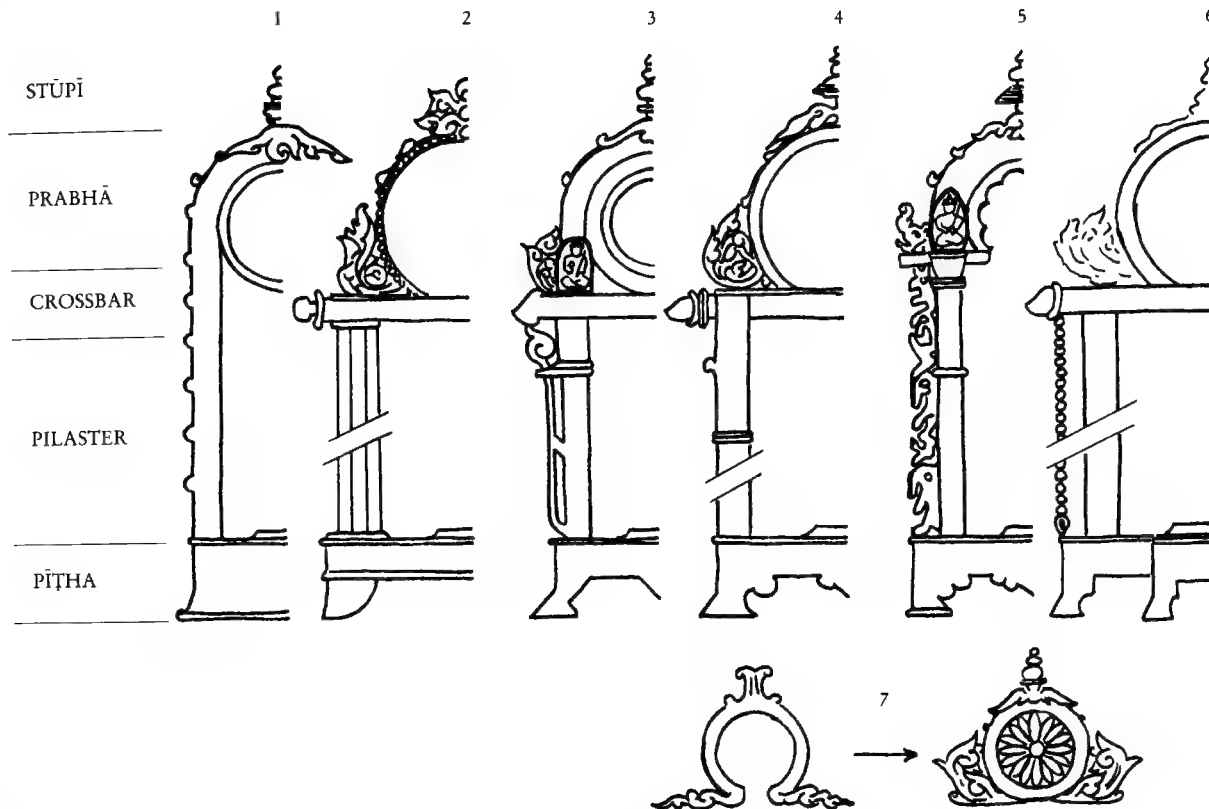


Fig. 174.

outer edge is studded with buttons (1) or decorated with a lateral lotus stem (3,4) or the more classical ascending sequence of elephants, horses and *yālis* (5). Often, too, they are ringed (3,4,5) and the protruding lateral buttons (1) may be a late stylization of those rings. In some cases, we meet reminiscences of a studded motive that hangs laterally (6) or of a pendant mango, patterns which are more specific of late Pāla bronzes of Kurkihar amongst other schools. (5) illustrates a capital which is possible only if no cross-bar separates the vault from the top of the pilaster.

- (3) The transverse beam or cross-bar of the seat is almost common (2,3,4) and ends typically in a mango bud on either side.
- (4) The *prabhā* or nimbus, which haloes the top of the hair-bun or the sinciput with petal-like rays, forms either a plain circle (1,2,3,4) or a semi-circle (5) and may be free (2,4) or contained within the arched vault (1,3,5); the lower part may be provided with lateral features (2,3,4,5) or not (1). These features

may be isolated (2,4) or combined with others (3,5) and depict either foliated scrolls (2,4), arched finials, niches occupied by attendants (3,5) or the *makara* (5) which is often confused with the foliated scroll (3). It would appear that the design of the isolated *prabhā* derives from the late Gupta *caitya* finial (7).

- (5) The upper finial or *stūpi* closely follows the western tradition (1,3) although it may also derive from the southern and eastern *kīrti-mukha* so stylized that it is hardly recognizable (2) (Figs. 175, 178). Another design (4,5) is reminiscent of the umbrella topping the *prabhā* of the early Buddhist Pāla bronzes of Bihar, or even the north-eastern flattened Buddhist *stūpa* (Figs. 176, 179 and 182). As we shall see, an elongated, triangular, lily-shaped and flaming jewel tops even a Mahiṣāsura brass of the early, still classical, phase of Nirmand, which illustrates the incidental infiltration of late Pāla morphological features into Eastern Himachal (Figs. 185 and 188). Almost invariably, stylized



Fig. 175. Viṣṇu. Brass, 17.5 cm. U.P. Early eleventh century.  
Arm-bands are still placed close to the shoulder, a feature that is observed in north India till the middle eleventh century when they were progressively placed closer to the elbow. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 176. Viṣṇu. Brass, 26 cm. U.P. Eleventh-twelfth century.  
(Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

leaves sprout laterally from under the upper finial, deriving from those of the totemic tree of the god or saint depicted, and of which two or three creepers encircle the upper outer sides of the vault or *prabhā*. In an uninterrupted pillar-and-vault design, these creepers can even extend to the base of the pillar (Fig. 189). The upper leaves are arranged almost symmetrically on either side of the *stūpī* (3,4,5) although in some cases they may assume an asymmetrical shell-like motif (1) (Figs. 176 and 183).

- (6) Gaṇeśa has his trunk directed to the left and, in many cases, wields an axe in his upper left hand.

Generally, the back of both the Uttar Pradesh and eastern Himachal Pradesh brass icons are rough in workmanship whereas those from north-western India and western Himachal Pradesh are, although void of details smoothly and neatly finished. The rear surface of the former is not only unpolished but often the backs of the *prabhā* and figures bear fingerprints of the caster, and pegs and cross-bars are crudely fashioned to ensure a stronger rear structure.



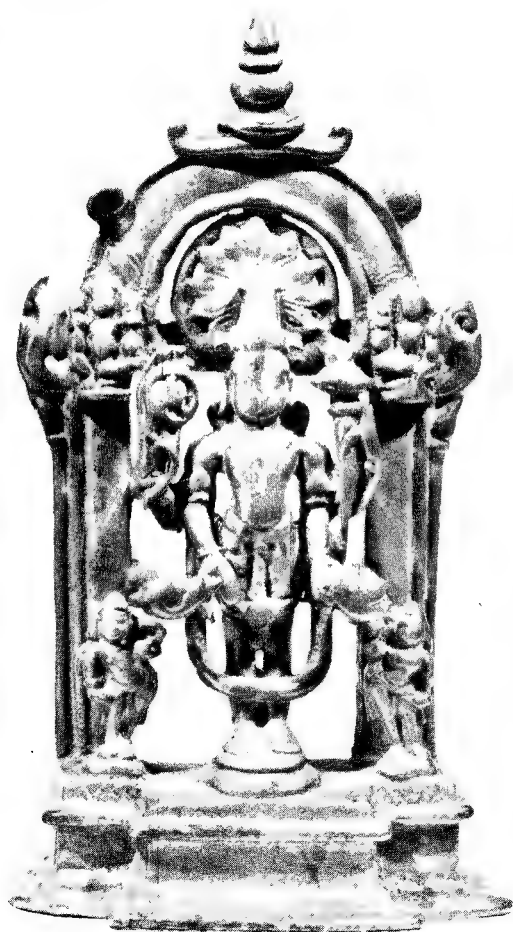


Fig. 177. *Viṣṇu*. Brass, 15.5 cm. U.P. Twelfth century. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

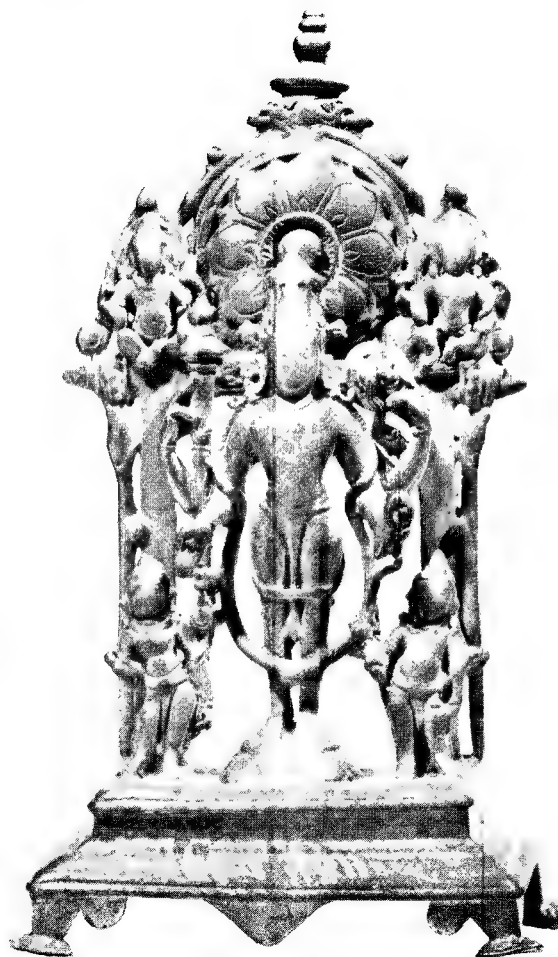


Fig. 179. *Front and back views of Viṣṇu*. Brass, 23.5 cm. U.P. Eleventh-twelfth century. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

Fig. 178. *Viṣṇu*. Brass, 23 cm. U.P. Twelfth century. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

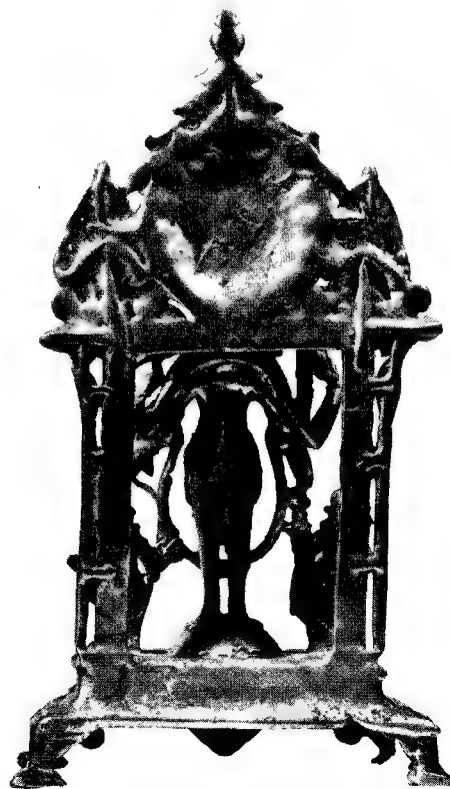
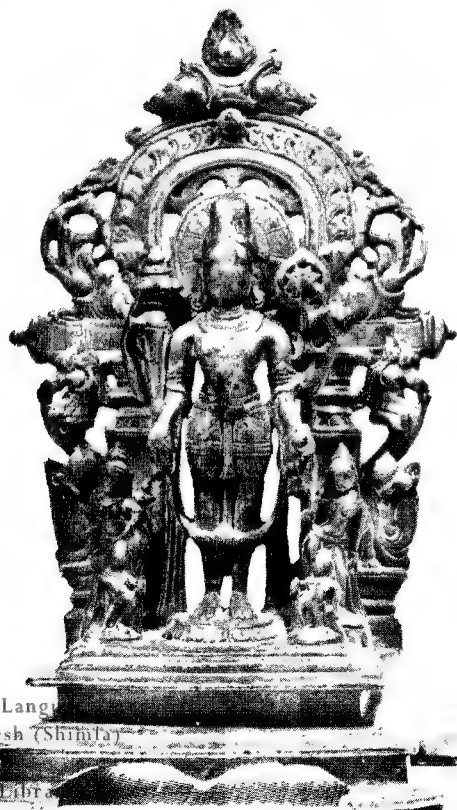




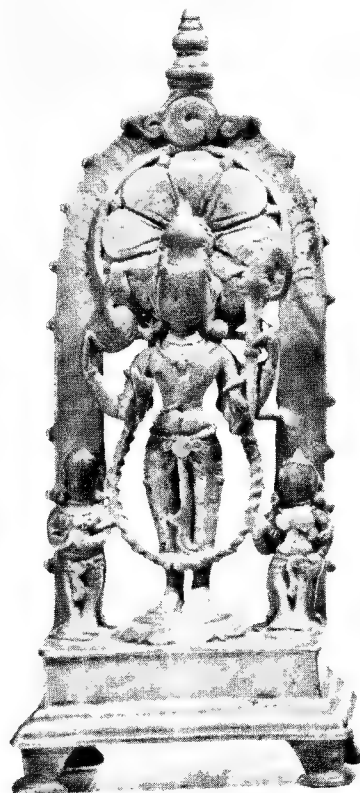
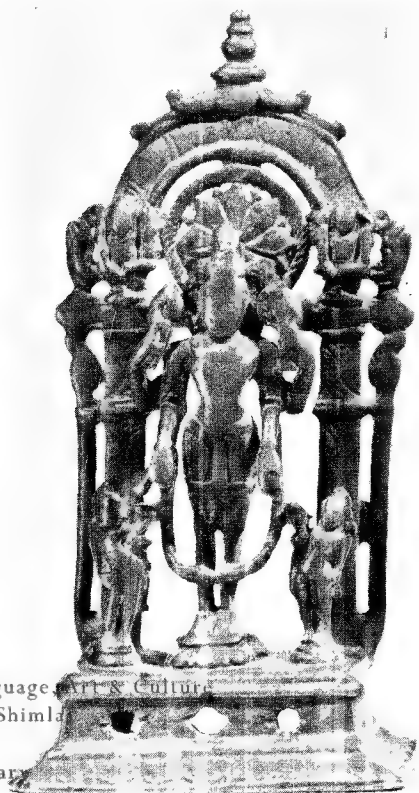
Fig. 180. Viṣṇu. Brass, 16.5 cm. U.P. Twelfth century. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 182. Viṣṇu. Brass, 22.5 cm. U.P. Late eleventh century. Note the intermediate position of the armlets. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

Fig. 181. Viṣṇu. Brass, 15.5 cm. U.P. Twelfth century. Note the design of the open-work motifs at the base (from left to right): a square, a losenge and a circle, the symbolic meaning of which we do not know. They might symbolize the Earth (Jambudvīpa) between heaven (the Sun's discus) and hell (square for Pātāla as the root of Mount Meru is squarish). (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

Fig. 183. Viṣṇu. Brass, 18.5 cm. U.P. or H.P. Late twelfth century. Shorter iconometry, studded pillars and design of the garland already display a trend towards folkish interpretation. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



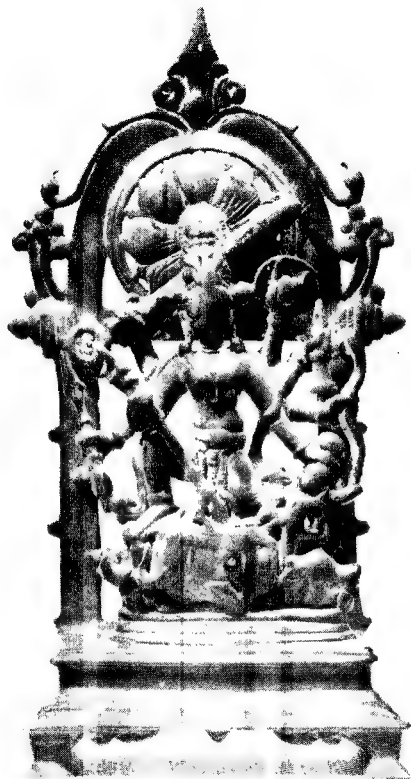


Fig. 185. *Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī*. Brass, 21 cm. H.P., Middle Sutlej. Twelfth-thirteenth century. Note the slight deviation in the axis of the pedestal. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 187. *Gaṇeśa*. Brass, 15 cm. H.P., Middle Sutlej. Twelfth century. Simla Museum.

Fig. 186. *Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī*. Brass, 15 cm. H.P., Middle Sutlej. Twelfth-thirteenth century. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand.



Fig. 188. *Gaṇeśa*. Brass, 15 cm. H.P., Middle Sutlej. Twelfth-thirteenth century. This *Gaṇeśa* is typical of those seen in Nirmand.





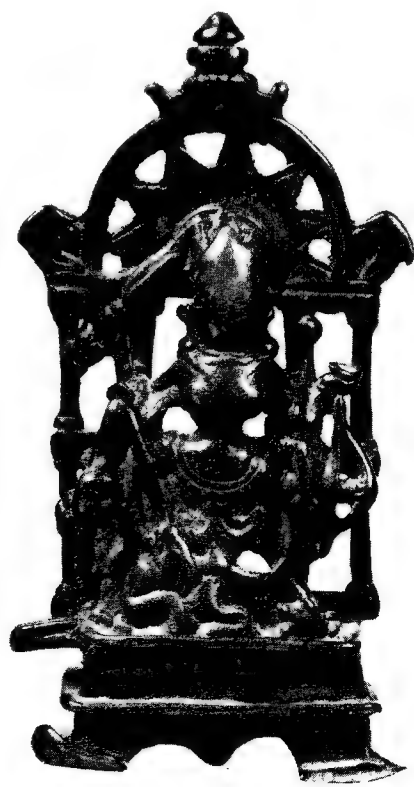
Fig. 189. Gaṇeśa. Brass, 14 cm. H.P., Middle Sutlej. Mid thirteenth century. Note the progressive stylization of the ears, the elongation of the trunk, the patch-like navel (which was later to become a characteristic of the folkish Gaṇeśas) and the creepers extending from the top of the vault down to the base of the pillars. A small jug is put against the pillar to the right of the deity. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

Fig. 195. Dancing Gaṇeśa. Brass. H.P., Middle Sutlej or Beas. Early thirteenth century. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand.



Fig. 190. Gaṇeśa. Brass, 13.5 cm. H.P., Middle Sutlej. Early thirteenth century. Note how the gaja-yāli-makara motif on the outer side of the pillar evolves into a geometric pattern. The niches surmounting the pillars are plain and no longer play a definite iconographic role.

Fig. 196. Durgā. Brass, 13.5 cm. H.P., Beas (Kullu). Early thirteenth century. The crown and the pīṭha provided with a nāla are features more western, inherent to Kullu where there were episodic incursions of Chamba influence. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)







*Figs. 191 to 194. Brass images of late classical Gaṇeśas fixed on the door lintels of the bhandar of the Paraśurāma temple in Nirmand in which the icons were kept before being stolen in 1982.*

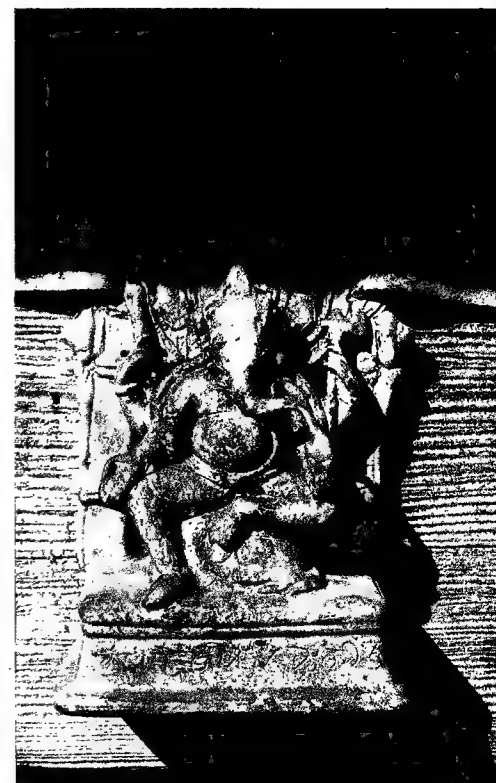
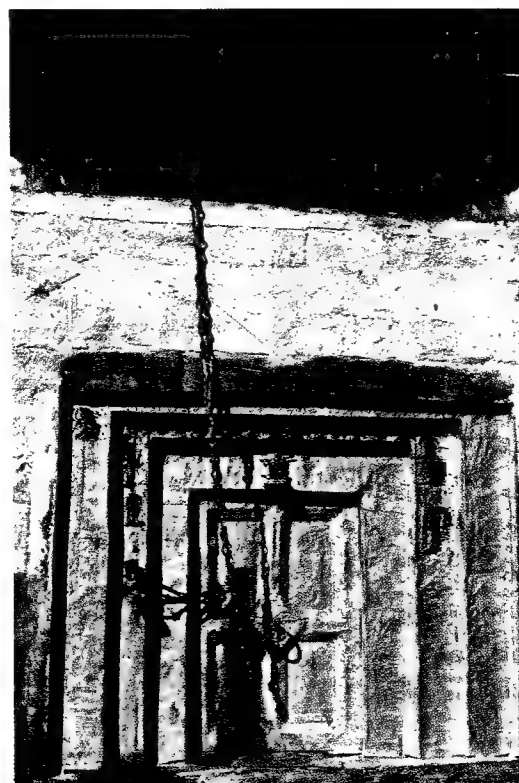




Fig. 197. *Durgā*. Brass, 15 cm. H.P., Beas (Kullu). Early thirteenth century. The same influence of Chamba in the crown, the bell held in the upper left hand and the tail of the lion arched against its back.



Fig. 199. *Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardinī*. Brass, 15 cm. Eastern U.P. or Bihar. Eleventh-twelfth century. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand. In the folkish period, *Mahiṣāsūramardinī* was to become the *prima inter pares* of eastern H.P. This small brass, the upper part of which is no longer of the Fig. 174, 6, type kept in Nirmand, remained a model for later casters.



Fig. 198. *Umā-Maheśvara*. Brass, approx. 10 cm. Eastern H.P. Early or mid thirteenth century. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand. A locally produced late classical or even early folkish brass after classical prototypes imported from U.P. Note the flowing scarves arched above the heads of both Śiva and Umā, which are apparently ringed as if interpreted as snakes, the way Nandi is depicted, the small figures seated in front of the plinth and the figures of Ganeśa and Skanda at the base of the pillars, features which were all to be adapted in many of the later folkish bronzes.

## THE EASTERN GROUP (MIDDLE SUTLEJ) (Contd.)

2. THE NIRMAND AND NIRATH GROUPS  
(Twelfth to Fifteenth Century)

PRATĪHĀRA AND KATYŪRĪ brasses were undoubtedly imported into Nirmand and other places in eastern Himachal Pradesh and, as there was a demand, it is most probable that casters from the plains of Uttar Pradesh established themselves in Nirmand either temporarily or even permanently when insecurity arose because of the advent of the Muslims in the plains. Until then, the circumstances in Nirmand must have been very similar to what was happening at the same time in Tibet, however on a much larger scale, with the introduction of north-eastern Indian Buddhist bronzes and casters. But whereas Tibet was able to maintain and assimilate foreign styles within its own refined literary culture and highly polished tradition, and thus to create its own regional idioms associated with big monasteries as early as the thirteenth century, the isolated Upper Sutlej was suddenly severed from its cultural and artistic sources, and had, within one generation or so, to cope with a virtual cultural vacuum: the classical artistic tradition proved to have been only passively imported and not actively understood. It had, most probably always, been basically a foreign cultural infiltration. Although they must have been aware that they would have to be self-reliant from then on, they had not anticipated this (and such an attitude is in conformity with Hindu culture and beliefs which are more concerned with the immediate present and tend to disregard the future). When the

last classical casters disappeared, local casters started to copy the classical models, at first very minutely and closely but with a progressive lack of true understanding of accessory features and their inherent meaning (let us recall the frequent morphological confusion between the foliated scrolls and the *makara* even in the classical stage). Soon, within a generation or two, indigenous casters adapted these features in a quite fancy way, or at least in interpretative stereotypes. Hence we may attempt to establish a relative chronology based on the degree of deviation from the classical prototypes. Likewise, the people of the hills started building wooden chalet-type temples as a substitute for the foreign stone *rekhā-nāgara* temples.

Three phases at least may be broadly defined:

- (1) A late classical phase which we assign to the eleventh, twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth century.
- (2) An early "folk" phase which still adhered to the classical prototypes and which must have immediately followed the preceding phase for one or two generations, thus dating from the second half of the thirteenth century at the latest.
- (3) A late "folk" phase starting from the early fourteenth century, the end of which we are able to ascertain to the late fifteenth century, as the many wooden panels carved

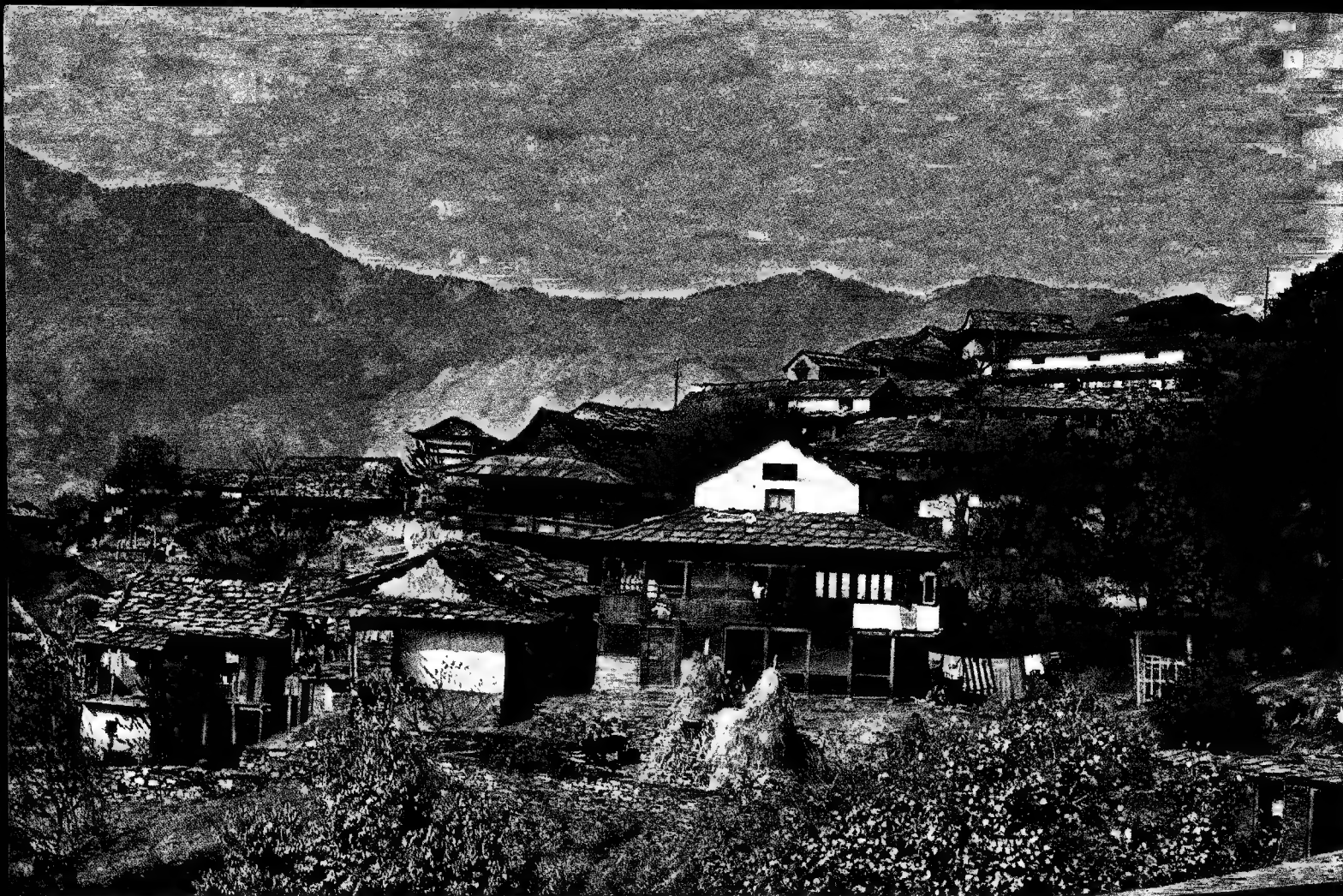


Fig. 200. View of Nirmand.

from the sixteenth century onwards show striking stylistic dissimilarities to these late brasses.

We may also point out that this Upper Sutlej group can be further sub-divided into at least two sub-groups which we name the Nirmand and the Nirath sub-groups after the places where most of the evidence in respect of each sub-group was observed in stone sculptures and brasses.

## 2.A. THE NIRMAND SUB-GROUP

(1) *Late Classical Phase (eleventh, twelfth and early thirteenth century)*

This phase is substantiated in Nirmand proper by seven brasses kept in the Paraśurāma temple and a few others observed in collections. Among these, icons of Gaṇeśa are particularly numerous as they used to be (and still are) nailed to the lintels above the entrances of many a shrine in Nirmand, a fact

which points out to the commercial importance Nirmand must have had in classical times. Gaṇeśa, indeed, was and still is particularly favoured by Hindu traders as was Kubera or Jambhala by Buddhist traders. We can only explain the former wealth of Nirmand by its localization so close to one of the main trade routes between western India and Tibet.

Salient features (refer Fig. 201):

- (1) **Bases:** they are of the same types observed in the preceding classical period of Uttar Pradesh.
- (2) **Pillars (1 & 2):** they are usually provided with one or more lateral buttons and, as a rule, have a slight lateral protruding feature at the base.
- (3) **Prabhā:** the lateral foliated scroll evolves either in a schematized foliated pattern as in 1, a or, more generally, terminates in a group of four to six small pearls, the upper-



most being close to the mango-bud descending from the upper finial (1,b).

- (4) **Finials:** besides the traditional *stūpī*, there is also the pointed triangular lily pattern which derives from the late Pāla and Sena finials of Bihar and Bengal.
- (5) **Crowns:** besides the classical crowns of Uttar Pradesh, designs of crowns related to the north-east Indian fashion are also found (3 & 4).
- (6) **Gaṇeśa:** his ears are schematized in a natural way (5), as in the preceding phase, his trunk is directed to the left and he bears an axe in the upper left hand.
- (7) Sometimes an attendant, or Garuḍa in the case of Viṣṇu, is depicted seated before the deity facing the viewer (a feature commonly seen in the classical brasses of Uttar Pradesh). Other features such as the hollowed discus, the horizontal striped skirt of Durgā, the curtailed garland of which only the upper part hangs on the arms, the extremity of the tail of Nandi, and Mahiṣa appearing on the rear of the hind quarter, the fringed blanket covering their backs, may be mentioned.

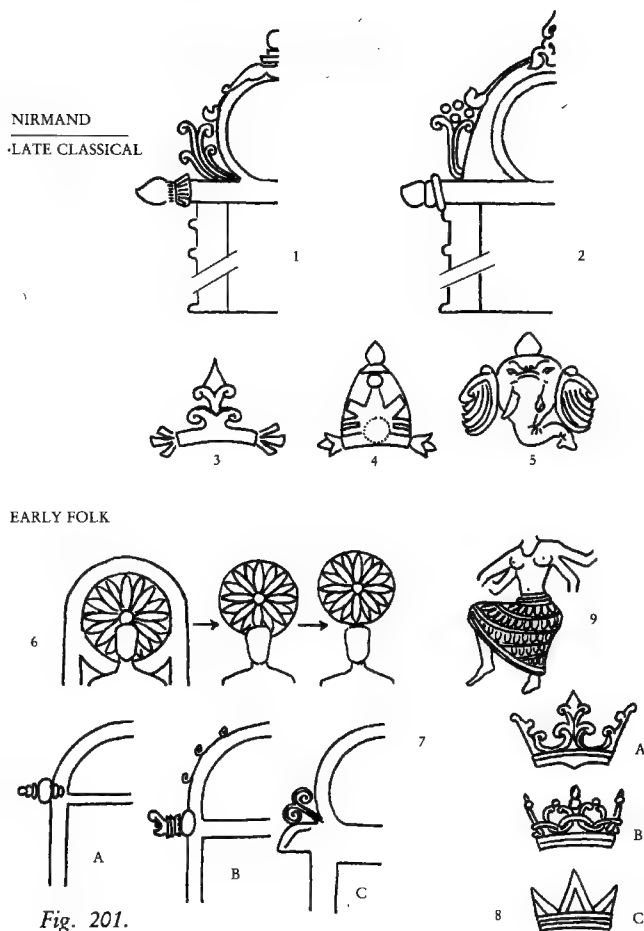


Fig. 201.

## (2) Early Folk Phase (second half of the thirteenth century)

With the disappearance of the migrant casters who brought the classical tradition of Uttar Pradesh to the hills, indigenous casters started to copy classical prototypes and soon, as early, perhaps, as the middle of the thirteenth century, introduced morphological deviations that must have changed the late classical style into a definite folk style. This process, which we assume might not have extended beyond a time gap of two generations of casters, must thus have been completed by the early fourteenth century.

The most obvious deviations and innovations of this early folk phase which thus lasted for only about the second half of the thirteenth century can be summarized as follows:

- (1) The *prabhā* tends to move towards a progressively higher position, a process ending in the fourteenth and fifteenth century when it finally surmounted the head of the deity; there is also a simultaneous reduction in its diameter. Often it is no longer fully con-

tained within the arched vault, but its upper border overlaps the upper section of the vault (see Fig. 201,6).

- (2) There is a progressive purely geometrical abstraction of accessories and ornamental patterns such as flowers, cross-bar terminals, *stūpī* finials, foliated scrolls, lateral patterns of pillars, etc. which are treated in a rather graphic way often emphasized by morphologically aberrant engravings.
- (3) The upper cross-bar at the back undergoes a drastic structural deviation, in that the inner section differs in width from the terminals and may even be out of axis. The terminals also undergo a change: they assume either the schematic form of a reversed acroterion or there is an obvious morphological transformation of the classical mango-like terminal into a symmetrical abstract pattern or a kind of vertical double volute which possibly derives also from the *makara* (cfr. Fig. 201, 7B).

- (4) The crowns definitely deviate from the classical prototypes of Uttar Pradesh but are better detailed, as if reproduced from a local model, or the more simple three-pointed crown so typical of Chamba and Kullu (Fig. 201, 8C) is adopted.
- (5) The anatomy becomes angular, schematic shapes and fleshes are no longer modelled; the face, with a high forehead, becomes elongated, with protruding, fish-like eyeballs and eyebrows with ascendant ends (as in the *mohras*), thick, moulded eyelids, a thin long nose, a stereotyped V-shaped smile enhanced by prominent cheek-bones, a pointed and often prominent chin (prognathism), a slim waist. Strikingly, these faces start bearing all the characteristics so typical of the contemporary phase of the *mohras* of the central school (Beas river) which similarly succeeded a classical phase.
- (6) Devī, mostly Durgā, wears a typical ample skirt which in Nirmand is marked with horizontal studded stripes (Fig. 201, 9), — whereas the stripes are vertical in the Nirath sub-group of the same period (Fig. 212). Umā is figured seated cross-legged on the left thigh of Śiva.
- (7) The technique also changes: only the main structure of the image is still modelled in wax, details, accessories and ornamentation being added by means of a commonly popular method consisting of the application of wax ribbons shaped in the desired form as is still practised by the Mallar and Kaser casters of Madhya Pradesh, the Dhokra of Bengal, and as has also been done in Kerala. Soon, even the figure will no longer be shaped in full *ronde boss* but roughly modelled from a wax plate leaving the rear almost hollow. The Mahiṣasuramardini icons will largely outnumber all others and some of them are even modelled by assembling parts individually moulded in wax or cast in permanent moulds as in the case of Fig. 204, of which at least three specimens with only slight differences are known to us.

### (3) Late Folk Phase (fourteenth century and later)

This late phase produced further morphological and structural deviations, with totally new attempts at interpretation of earlier structures.

Some constants are, however, obvious such as the hollowed discus, the lion with its tail arched towards the head and a definite technical use of thin wax sheets or plates which, after modelling, leaves the rear as a completely hollowed reverse of the front. This is due, perhaps, because of scarcity of copper.

Besides the elongated faces, there appear, perhaps, in the later part of this phase, some round faced brasses, which although closely related to the Nirmand style may have possibly originated elsewhere, perhaps in Rampur where folk stones of this period display this type of round faces (Fig. 208). However, Kullu was also characterized—at least so it seems to us—by round faces.

The *stūpī* that tops the crest of the vault or upper slopes of the rear structure is sometimes replaced by a five-pointed star, a feature commonly seen in the western style, or a small discus. Both star and discus take the place of the displaced *prabhāvalī*.

As we had no opportunity to fully investigate the Upper Sutlej east of Sarahan, past Rampur, where we saw quite logically, some Vaiṣṇava stones (Fig. 208), we would not have had much of an idea of what would possibly have been folkish production, if any, in the Upper Sutlej Valley and in Kinnaur had we not been able to get photographs of a rare brass through the kind courtesy of Dr. Leo Figiel (Fig. 211).

The brass at first seems iconographically quite incoherent, sharing the third eye of Śiva, the mace of Viṣṇu (as seen in Rampur), which is furthermore ringed as in many folkish bronzes of eastern Himachal Pradesh where it came so often to be confused, as we shall later see, with the spear or *śakti*, an inversed sacrificial thread which is put on the right shoulder, and a skirt apparently made of leaves as for the Buddhist goddess Pārṇaśabarī. The openwork filigree base is also of a very unusual occurrence.

A close stylistic analysis reveals many of the Middle Sutlej characteristics that we observed in brasses from the Nirmand area: eyebrows, elongated face, ringed neck, ringed belt, scarf interrupted at the elbow's height, ears, earrings and mace like those seen on the stone Viṣṇu from

Fig. 202. *Umā-Maheśvara*. Brass, 24.5 cm. Middle Sutlej, Nirmand. Second half of the thirteenth century. Simla Museum. Compare with the late classical prototype in Fig. 198. The caster still adheres closely to the classical models and no obvious deviations appear so far. The guilloche pattern along the pillars is an interpretation of similar projecting features, appearing although in a more discrete way, in classical brasses while it is here meant to represent a frame of lotus petals frequently observed in monumental niches. Note the emphasized chest of Śiva.



Fig. 206. *Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardinī*. Brass, approx. 15 cm. Kasholigad, Middle Sutlej. Late fourteenth century. A late folkish bronze cast after an earlier folkish prototype.

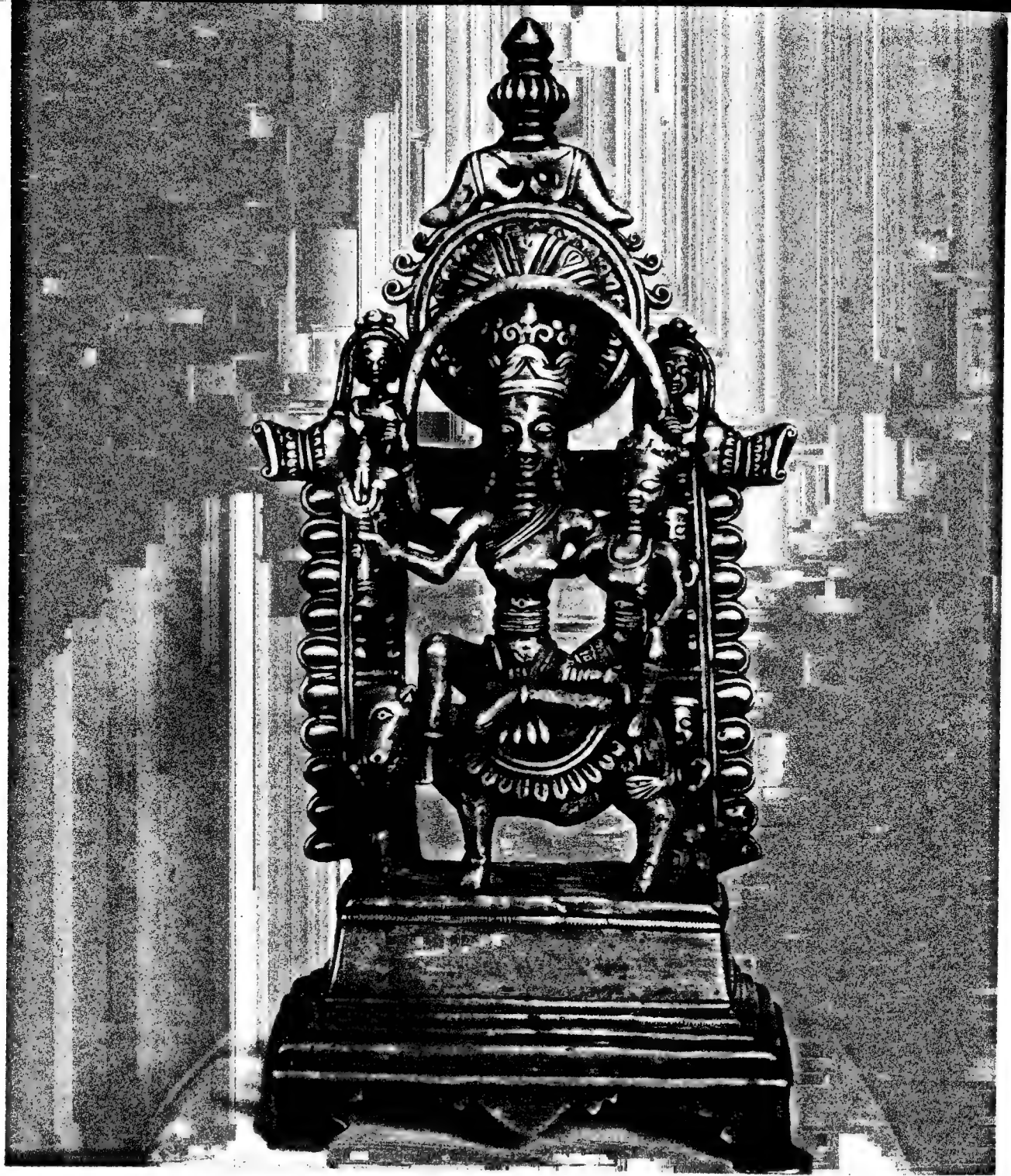


Fig. 203. *Umā-Maheśvara*. Brass, 33 cm. Middle Sutlej, Nirmand. Ca 1300 or early fourteenth century. The folkish style has attained full maturity but still clings to classical prototypes, although it succeeds in creating its own idiom and anatomical features such as the face with fishlike eyes and arched eyebrows curving upwards at the end. Sexual differentiation is hardly noticeable (as is so frequently the case with mohras) and Śiva even seems to have breasts as his nipples get hypertrophied while Umā's breasts are now quite atrophied. Note also how the prabhavali is placed in a vertically decentered and higher position, and the engraved geometrical patterns on

the foliated scrolls under the stūpī. The erstwhile projecting mango-pattern of the cross-bar is no longer in axis with its component as exemplified in Fig. 201, 7, B. The belt consists of four rows of ringed patterns the topmost of which bears a hole as if it was a fleshy roll of the belly with its navel. In this case, a second navel appears on the lower part of Śiva's belly. Note also the neck, the fleshy folds of which are treated as small rings, and the elaborate way Śiva's trident is depicted. The horizontal stripes of Umā's skirt are now clearly emphasized. The base, however, retains all the appearances of the classical models. (Courtesy Mr. M. Postel.)



Fig. 204. *Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardini*. Brass, 24 cm. Middle Sutlej, Nirmand. Early fourteenth century. This brass *Durgā* is extremely representative of the important creative centre that Nirmand must have been as we know of at least two almost similar brasses, varying only in height (25.5 and 27 cm. respectively), minor details and bases, thus ruling out a faked version, and published in Neven's *Sculptures des Indes*, 1978, Nos. 167 & 168. Note the horizontally striped skirt with guilloché patterns, elongated face and neck now with four rings, the spiralled former foliated patterns and the *gaja-yāli* motif of which the *gaja* component is no longer properly understood. Note also the garland that covers only the upper front pair of arms. (Courtesy Mr. M. Postel.)



Fig. 205. Front and back views of *Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardini*. Brass, 17 cm. Middle Sutlej, Nirmand. Late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. Further deviations are now more obvious: the head is over-proportionate, the belt, now reduced to a double ring, no longer plays its former role, the base becomes simpler and the pillars are now reduced to their simplest expression while the *prabhavali* has also now lost its function and is reduced to a mere ornamental form. The foliated elements are now totally dissociated from their former inherent locations and appear as completely isolated small pearls or scrolls. Note also how the projecting mango of the absent cross-bar protrudes in an upward bend of the vault and how the *stūpi* gets the same shape. The back view shows that the icon has been cast by means of thin sheets of wax as if to prevent any wastage of metal which could have become episodically scarce. (Courtesy Mr. M. Postel.)



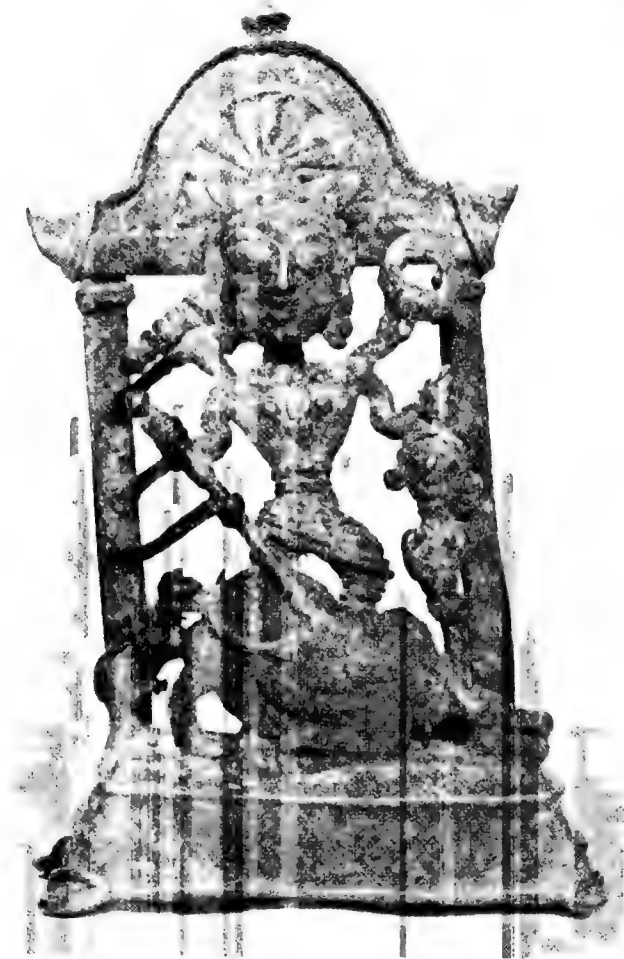


Fig. 207. *Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini*. Brass, 15 cm. Middle Sutlej, probably Nirmand. First half of the fifteenth century. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand. With the fifteenth century, the later folkish phase, which had already started in the fourteenth century, progressively displayed even further deviations, not so much in the iconography which soon reached a point of stabilization, but in the prabhās, the iconometry and a steadily deteriorating technical skill. The head became larger than the torso which in turn was treated more as an inverted flat and unmodelled triangle. Note the extreme hypertrophy of the stūpī and small rings encircling the finials of the vault as well as the simple footed corners of the base as in the previous specimen. The horizontal stripes of the skirt are now merely suggested, without any other detail of the fabric, and the casting process has become so crude that for the sake of cohesion, pins had to be provided between the icon and the pilasters.

Fig. 208. *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa*. Stone. Middle Sutlej, Rampur. Late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Note the form of the mace and short front fold of the paridhāna.





Fig. 209. Gaṇeśa. Brass, 11 cm. Middle Sutlej (?), may be Rampur. Late thirteenth century. This rounded sort of mace seems to be inherent to the Rampur area or, as we shall see, to the Upper Sutlej area as well. (Private collection.)

Rampur, thin vaulted *prabhāmaṇḍala* similar to the one of the small brass Rāma (Fig. 210), small elements curving upwards which are remnants of the former salient features of the cross-bar and the foliated motif or *makara*-head between the pilaster and the *prabhāvalī*. The entire vaulted portion in the back is covered with the same foliated motif similar in design to that of the skirt or rather the apron, as the real fabric of the skirt appears at the back where, moreover, an atrophied cross-bar and a small *prabhāvalī* are to be seen. Although the name of the deity is not known, little doubt exists as to his relation to a fertility cult. Technically, the icon is hollow cast, and many of its parts have been fashioned by way of the *dhun* or wax-thread application method.

The clue to its origin is provided by the small



Fig. 210. Rāma. Brass, 5.5 cm. Middle Sutlej (?), may be Rampur. Early fourteenth century. Note the thin, vaulted *prabhā* and the facial features similar to Fig. 211. (Private collection.)

detail that tops the upper *prabhā* and which incontrovertibly proves it to be a figure of the *Kyung.bya* or Tibetan Garuḍa (an owl, in fact) topping so many of the eleventh to thirteenth century western Tibetan bronzes. This leaves but little doubt as to its provenance which, therefore, must be between Rampur and Namgya or Shipke at the spring of the Sutlej close to the western Tibetan border, and, according to Francke's report in his *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, p. 14, not further east than Rarang where the author is said to have seen "the last specimen of Indian hill architecture on the road" between Rampur and Tibet. This localization makes it possible to now surmise that the ornamentation of the base derives most probably through Tibet and possibly also through Spiti, from the very old Atlantes between two lions that was specific to Gilgit and the High Indus Valley.

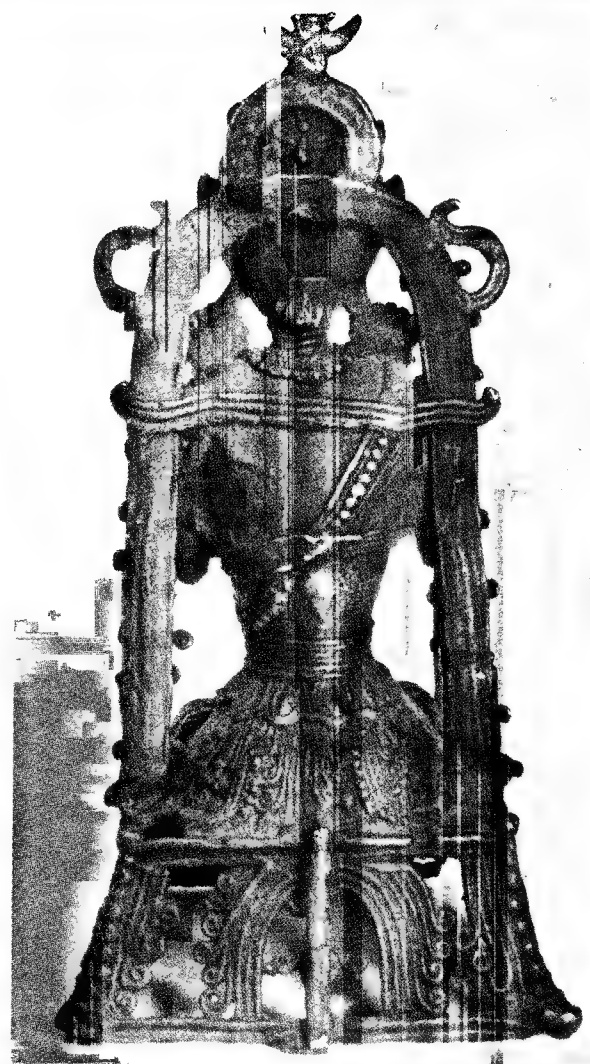


Fig. 211. Front and back views of an unknown village deity. Brass, 24 cm. Upper Sutlej (Kinnaur?). Early fourteenth century (?). (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)

## 2.B. THE NIRATH SUB-GROUP

Since this group is quite similar to the Nirmand group, we will deal here only with aspects which are or seem to be specific to Nirath:

- (1) **Bases:** Almost all are plain (*pīṭha*-type 1 of Fig. 174) with a relatively high plinth, sometimes with single or double moulding which may be plain, studded or striped. Simple clawed feet may be added at the corners (*pīṭha*-type 2 of Fig. 174).
- (2) **Upper portion and *prabhā*:** The main feature is the *chantourné* profile of the arch which tends to assume either an inverted concave V shape or even a straight double

sloped motif often studded with pearls or small spirals.

- (3) **Durgā's skirt:** It is generally provided with *vertical* stripes whereas Nirmand invariably has *horizontal* stripes.
- (4) **Gaṇeśa:** has a curious protruding patch-like navel (which occurs also in many north-western Indian folk bronzes) resulting from a semiotic interpretation of the serpent's head resting close to the navel in classical and early folk stones and bronzes. Folds of the *dhōṭī* fall between the legs. Moreover, the trunk, generally directed to the left, becomes less curved with time. The axe is held on the right side.





Fig. 212. *Durgā Maḥiṣāsūramardīnī*. Middle Sutlej, Sūrya temple, Nirath. Second half of the thirteenth century. Note the vertical striped skirt.



Fig. 213A. *Durgā Maḥiṣāsūramardīnī*. Middle Sutlej. Sūrya temple, Nirath. Late fourteenth century. Note the mace-head that tops the spear.

Fig. 213B. *Durgā Maḥiṣāsūramardīnī*. Brass, approx. 15 cm. Middle Sutlej, Nirath. Mid thirteenth century. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand. An early folkish brass after a classical prototype. Note the jewel between the breasts.



Fig. 214. *Durgā Maḥiṣāsūramardīnī*. Brass, 19.5 cm. Middle Sutlej, Nirath. Early fourteenth century. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand. Note the breasts, the central pendant, the two scarves and the curved, sloping arch studded with pearls. Belt and neck are ringed as in Nirmand.

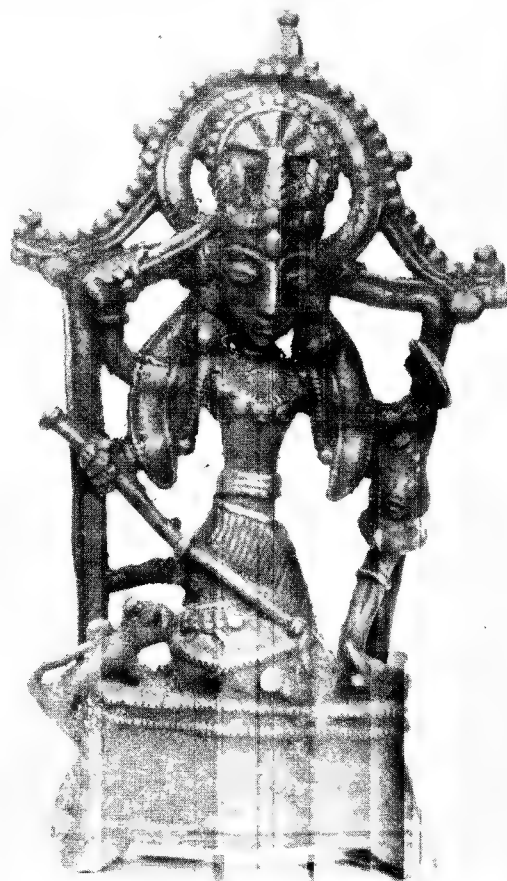


Fig. 216. *Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini*. Brass, 15.5 cm. Middle Sutlej, Nirath. Fifteenth century. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand. As in Nirmand, this later folk style phase is characterized by reduction of anatomy into simple geometrical forms, such as the diabolical shape of the torso and skirt. The flowering prabhāvalī has disappeared and the shape of the upper part is typical of the late folkish phase. The cross-bar now assumes a purely architectonic function, that of maintaining cohesion between the two atrophied pillars. Curls replace the upper rows of pearls. The base is flattened and its feet considerably atrophied but are still seen as projecting features at the corners of the base (unlike as in the next figure). Their function is now purely conventional and is no more adapted to their former role of a stand. In this final phase an arris starts replacing the former curved angles of the base.



Fig. 217. *Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini*. Brass, 25.5 cm. Middle Sutlej, Nirath. Second half of the fifteenth century. Same remarks as for Fig. 216. The feet of the base have now completely disappeared and the arris is now fully developed at the corners. The stūpī is replaced, quite incoherently, by a plain discus and the face has a fixed grin similar to that of the fifteenth century cast mohras. However, the skirt still has well-marked vertical stripes, the breasts are still marked with two patches and the heavy necklace still bears a central pendant. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)



Fig. 215. *Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardinī*. Brass, approx. 22 cm. Middle Sulej. Fourteenth century. Same remarks as for Fig. 214. The upper part of the impressive prabhā is separately cast and added by means of two sockets. Note the sun and

moon symbols on the upper prabhā and the profusion of studded rows. Note also, as in Nirmand, the overproportionate dimensions of the head. (Courtesy Dr. P. Malet.)

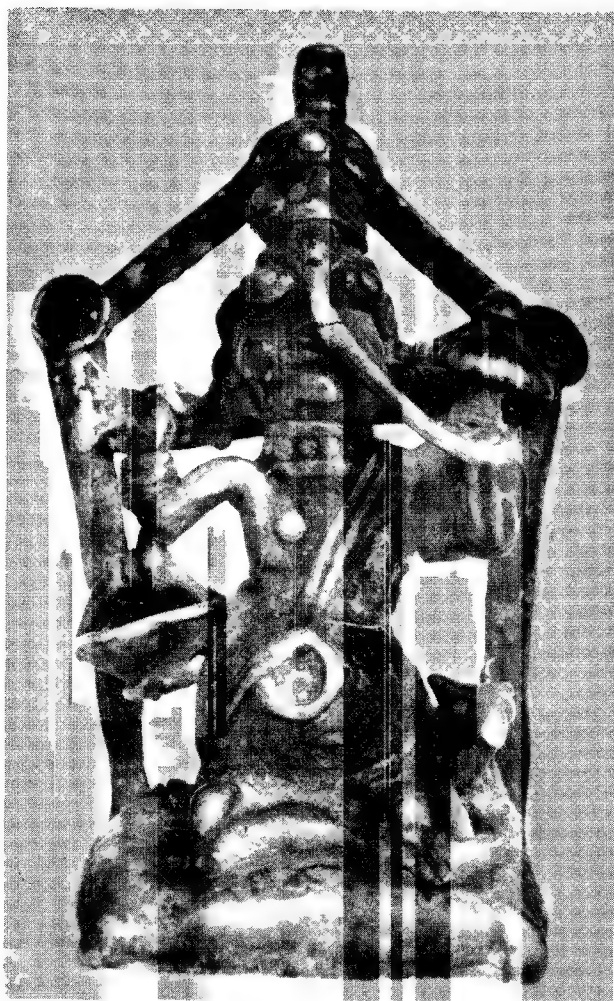


Fig. 219. Gaṇeśa. Brass, 8 cm. Middle Sutlej, Nirath or Beas. Second half of the fifteenth century. Patched navel, ringed collar with pearls, patched nipple, right, slim trunk and lotus (upper left hand) designed as an umbrella, as in the Beas. Note the atrophy of the feet into a slightly pinched aris at the corners of the base. The upper part of the framed background has the appearance of a tympanum with discus as acroteria (former sun and moon symbols) and the prabhāvalī tops the apex. Note how a small crown is placed on the cranial protuberance of Gaṇeśa. (Private collection.)



Fig. 218. Veṅṅopāla. Brass, 23 cm. Middle Sutlej, Nirath. Fifteenth century. Vertical striped paridhāna, ringed belt, patched navel, nipples and necklace with pendant. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)



## C — THE CENTRAL GROUP (BEAS)

## GENERAL FEATURES

GEOGRAPHICALLY, THE BEAS VALLEY of Kullu runs on a north-south axis between the Ravi and the Sutlej complexes. As not many works of art prior to the sixteenth century have survived in Mandi proper, this section will focus on brasses that are still to be seen in Kullu or the Upper Beas valley and those which are or may be stylistically related to them. It seems that there are quite a few of the latter and, as is the case with the *mohras* cast in the old style, nearly all of them were acquired in Simla mainly during the past twenty years as were also the brasses of the eastern group.

The valley of Kullu has one unique geographical feature among all the Himachali hills: it is the only one to penetrate deep into the Himalayan range, thus providing traders with easy access to the Rohtang Pass leading to Lahaul and Chamba through the Chobia Pass and to Ladakh and Yarkand beyond.

To the south, it is linked with the Middle Sutlej and Nirmand by a track leading through the Jalori Pass, and with Punjab via Mandi and the Lower Beas valley.

To the west, Kullu is protected by the eastern buttresses of the Dhaula Dhar Range as it is to the east by the Deo Tibba and Bara Shigri Glacier, but the Rohtang proves to be the weakest point, and it

was through this pass that there were continual incursions from Tibet, Ladakh, Chamba and Kashmir. Hence it is no wonder that Kullu culturally absorbed a mixture of both western (Kashmir, Chamba) and, to a lesser degree, eastern (Sutlej) artistic features. As a result, Kullu has no homogeneous, well-defined style like Chamba and Nirmand but has several, and for the most part displays various and variable features of both the western and the eastern groups.

One of the most salient features of Kullu's folk style are the numerous Vaiṣṇava icons such as Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Garuḍa and Kṛṣṇa besides those of Durgā, Gaṇeśa and Maheśvara. Viṣṇu has, indeed, since long been dynastic tutelary deity of Kullu's rulers, and, most probably, Viṣṇu brass icons of the late Pratīhāra and Katyūri styles of Uttar Pradesh might have been imported into this valley between the tenth and early thirteenth century.

Another feature is the general trend towards rounded faces, although elongated faces in the eastern style are by no means rare. Eyes, too, are larger than at Nirmand, more protruding, with thinner eyelids or none at all, prominent cheek-bones, a short and almost flattened nose. The rear structure and the *prabhā* are also less ornamented and sometimes even plain, broader and, as in Nirath and

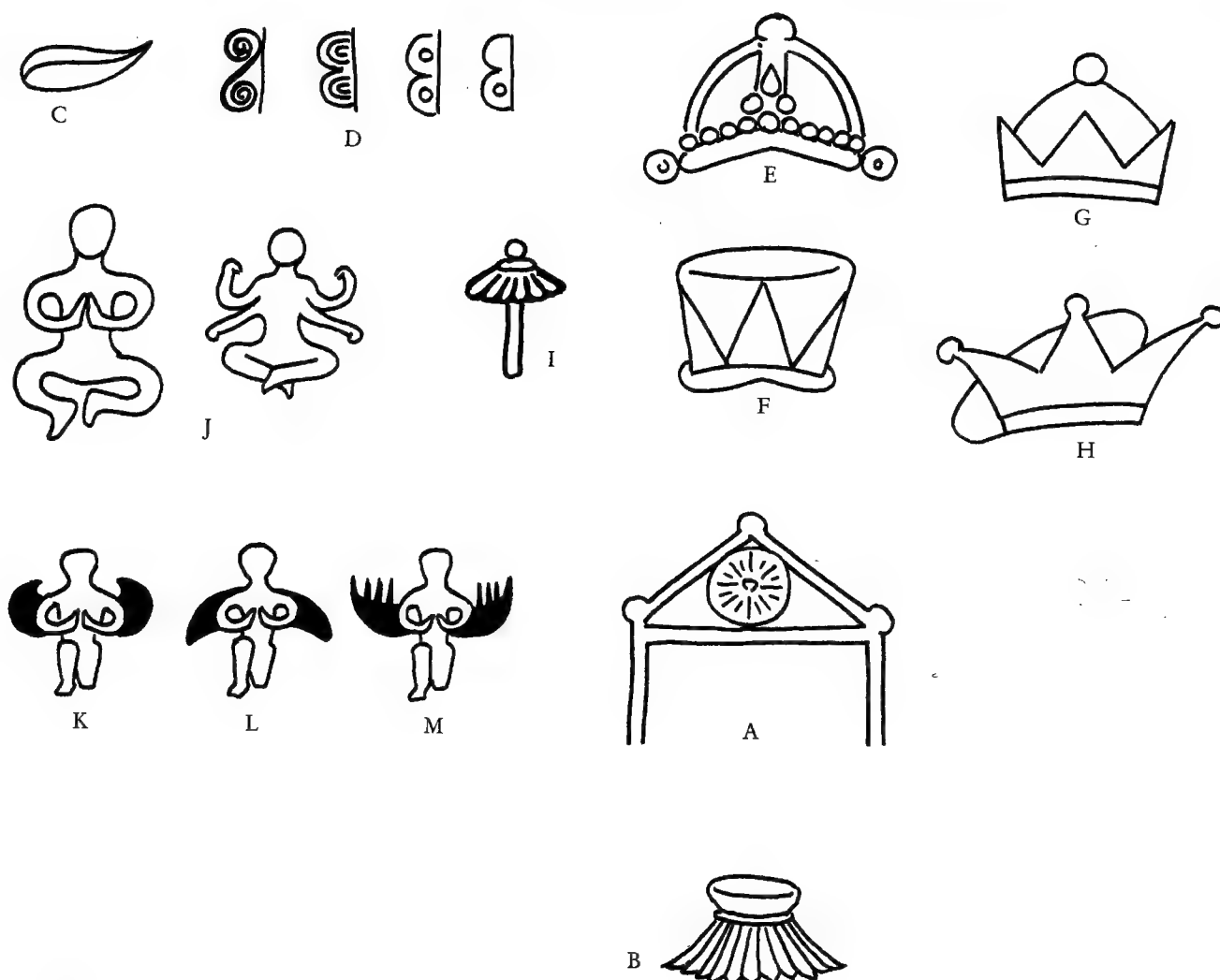


Fig. 220.

Cis-Sutlej, the double sloped tympanum seems to be a favourite design (Fig. 220 A). A rosette, a star or even a discus may sometimes decorate the vaulted arch, a pattern that was derived from Kashmir via Chamba and Lahaul, and even replace the displaced *prabhāvalī*. Besides the garland, a long scarf or *uttariya* may also flow down either side of the shoulders, a feature common in Chamba and Lahaul. Viṣṇu may stand on a small lotus base consisting of a single row of narrow, descending petals (Fig. 220, B). The spiral is undoubtedly one of the favourite features of Kullu and bases are generally further decorated with mouldings, carvings or even geometrical patterns.

It has been repeatedly stated in former publica-

tions that numerous Pāla bronzes were found in Kullu. However, we have not been able to check on any evidence of this. We surmise that such a statement might have originated at a time (Goetz, 1955) when Kashmiri and other bronzes related to the northern Kashmiri areas were still almost unknown and might thus have been confused with Pāla bronzes.

On the whole, the workmanship is less crude and even more refined and classical, although less spectacular than that of the Nirmand bronzes. Full, plain-cast *ronde bosses* are also current and add to the impression that copper was by no means as scarce as it seems to have been in Nirmand where wax sheet modelling so largely prevailed. Indeed,

Hiuen Tsang in his reports on his travels in India in the seventh century says that the valley of Kullu yielded copper, silver and gold ores, and Harcourt confirms this in his own report of the last century.

Also, whereas it seems that the eastern school might have been unproductive from about the sixteenth century onwards, Kullu, as also Chamba, carried on casting until very recently since modern brasses are by no means rarely seen in shrines.

Prior to a survey of the brasses that might be attributed to Kullu, current evidence observed in Kullu proper should be briefly summarized:

Of Nirmand's late folk style, we can only surmise that the variety of round-headed and heavily cast brasses originated in Kullu since heads are for the most part round with big almond-shaped eyes as in late classical and folk-style stone sculptures. Later on, the face tends towards elongation and becomes stereotyped with eyes that become still larger, nearly elliptic, or sometimes fish-like as is common in Chamba, in works of a higher standard (Fig. 220, C); ears also change into double spirals or similar patterns which are like those we see in other folk styles, such as that of Bastar (Madhya Pradesh) (Fig. 220, D).

Spirals easily obtained by means of wax-threads (*dhun*) and chased chevrons are Kullu's most favourite patterns. The lotus also, when held as an attribute, is shaped like a miniature umbrella (Fig. 220, I) and, condensing with the *cakra* of the *prabhāvalī* that came to be used as an upper finial, the same lotus pattern metamorphosed into an umbrella when topping the double sloped superstructure of the background as in Fig. 231.

In folk stones of the late classical and early folk period (twelfth-thirteenth century) or possibly even earlier, there is also anatomical evidence of Kashmiri influence in the bellies and hemispherical caps or crowns, often in the form of a studded diadem topped by a small spherical pattern, or even the Central Asiatic corbel-shaped tiara for Viṣṇu (Fig. 220, E and F).

The Chamba variety of the three-pointed crown is also encountered. It became a favourite feature in Kullu where it was characterized by rather wide but short points almost invariably

topped by the spherical pattern (Fig. 220, G). Later on, this crown became identical with those appearing in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century miniature paintings of Himachal, namely, with a small sphere topping each point (Fig. 220, H).

Gaṇeśa has some specific features: his trunk is sometimes curved towards the right; his navel is patch-like and his ears are stylized and depicted in the same way as those of a human. When used as an attribute, the lotus in Kullu has the typical look of a small umbrella (Fig. 220, I).

In the later folk style, arms and legs are flexibly treated in rounded and curved patterns as if they belong to latex dolls, a stylistic feature that was common also to Chamba (Fig. 220, J).

As the main deity of the valley was Viṣṇu, many of the bells still in use in shrines are topped by images of Garuḍa which thus provide further clues for a narrower definition of the folk style of Kullu; the design of the wings completely differs from that so commonly observed in Chamba.

Garuḍa kneels, with the left knee bent backwards and the right projecting forwards. He invariably displays the *añjali* gesture and his beak is suggested by a long curved nose.

The wings are of two different types, which might be indicative of two iconometric local traditions, as both types seem to pertain to brasses that were most probably cast in Kullu:

- they are either schematically suggested without any detail, being round or pointed (Fig. 220, K & L);
- or more naturally designed with upward protruding feathers and an ascendant curved tip (Fig. 220, M) in a later phase.

Although we are adopting the same chronological and stylistic sub-divisions for Kullu that we have used for the eastern group, we must beware of too hasty conclusions, as there is much evidence of foreign styles and infiltration, as also, we believe, of a still earlier phase of "folk" style which could have lasted from the tenth to the late twelfth century.

Should our attributions be correct, it will be seen that icons of Durgā Maḥiṣāsuramardīnī occur quite rarely in Kullu proper and the few specimens under discussion cannot, in all certainty, be attributable to Kullu as they could also be of a Cis-Sutlej origin.



Fig. 221a. Viṣṇu Śeṣaśāyin. Stone slab. Jagatsukh, Gayatri temple. Fourteenth century. In the early folkish phase of the thirteenth-fourteenth century, faces are round and foreheads low. Ears are still treated in a natural way. Lips are thick and eyes almost oval. The diadem is studded.

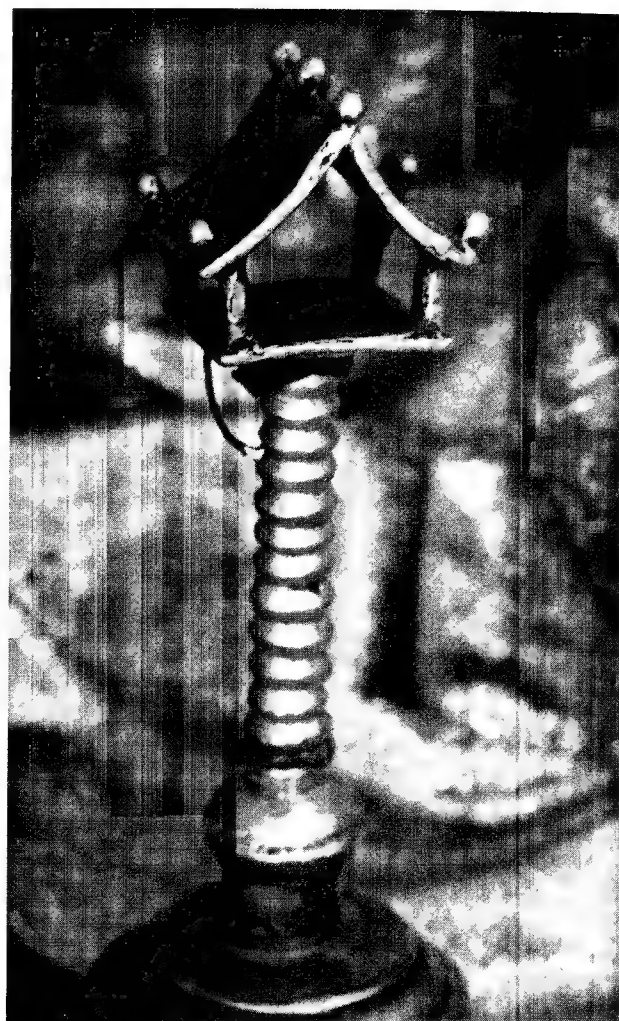
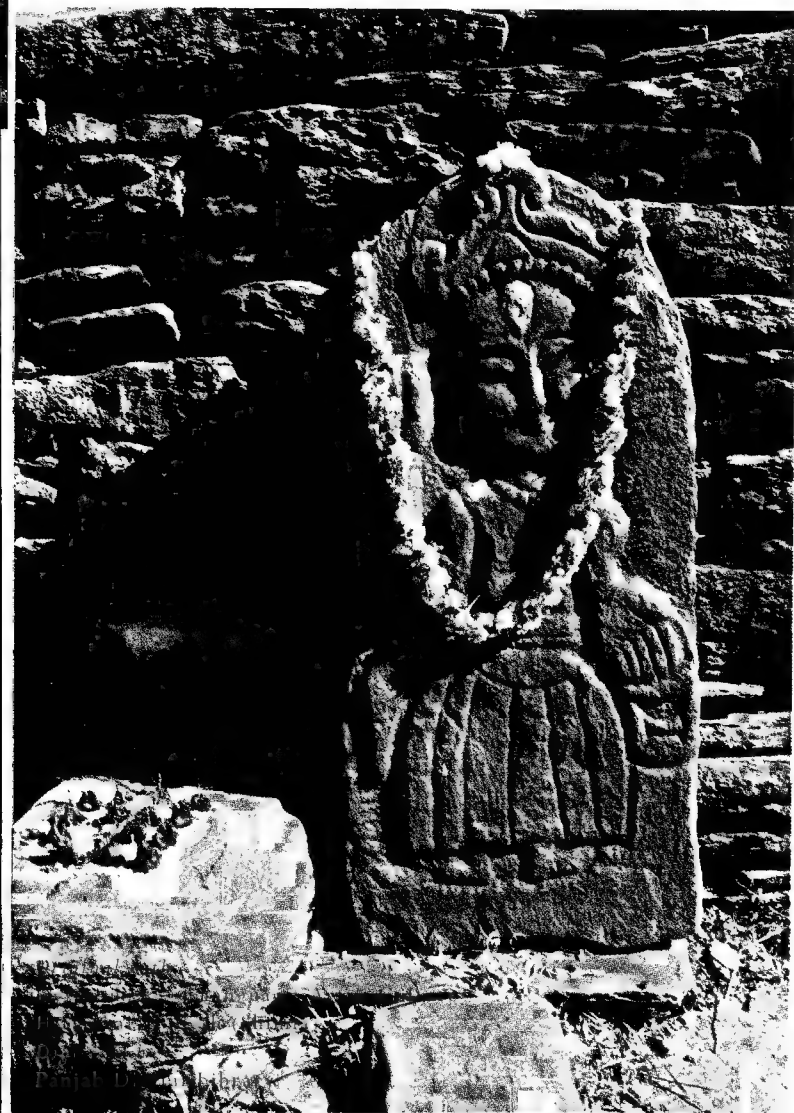


Fig. 225. Miniature shrine topping the handle of the bell. Brass. Rabla (Kullu), Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa ratha at Kullu's Dussehra.

Fig. 221b. Durgā. Stone. Tripurasundarī temple, Naggar. Fifteenth century. In the later folkish phase, heads become elongated: long nose, high forehead, fish-shaped eyes, V-shaped smile and thin lips, high projecting cheek-bones. A similar evolution occurred in the mohras.



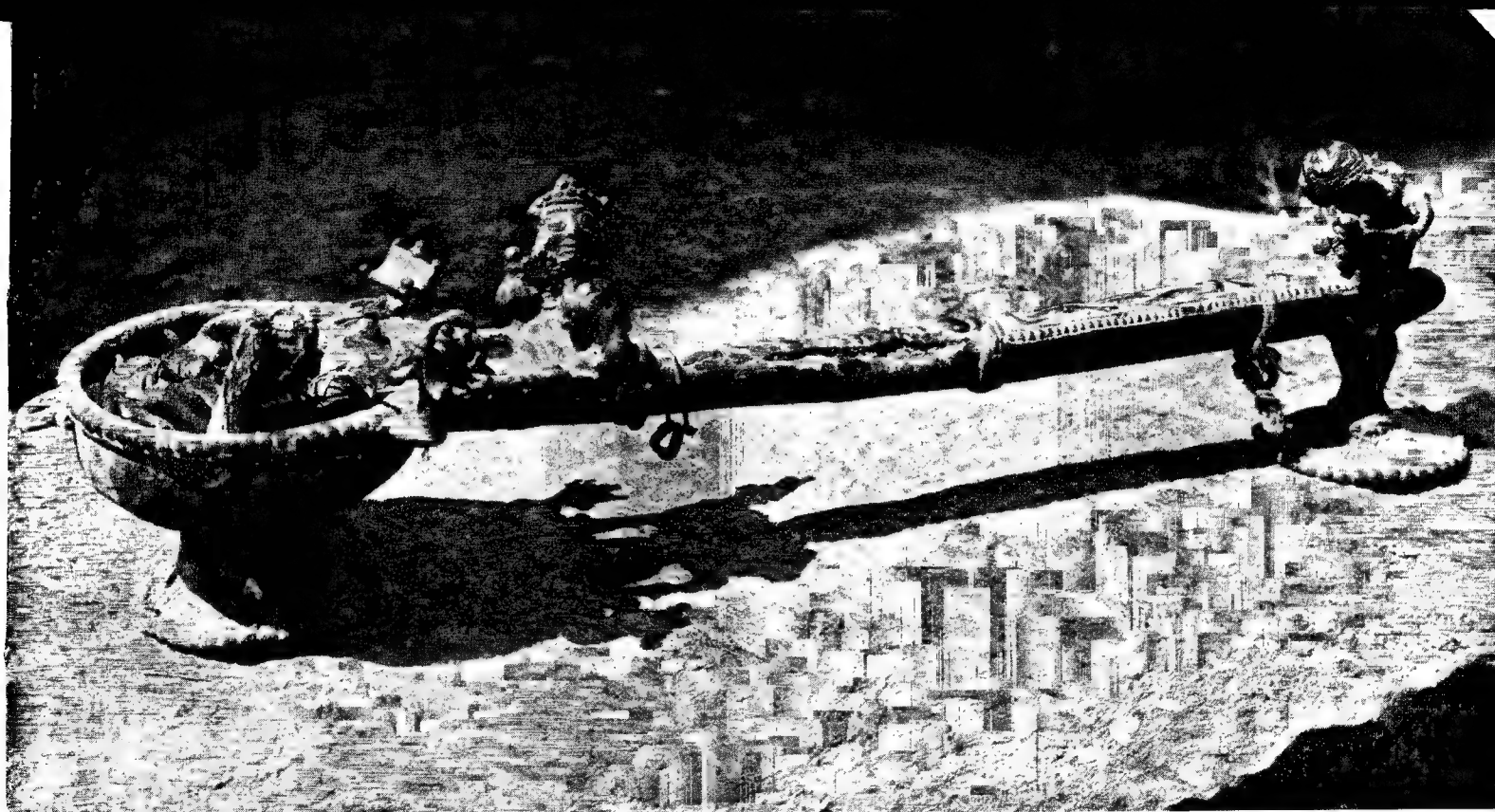


Fig. 223. Incense burner. Brass, ca 30 cm. Bajaura, small shrine north-east of the Viśveśvara temple. Fourteenth century.



Fig. 224. Detail of Fig. 223. The face is already elongated but the forehead between eyebrows and studded diadem is still absent. The icon holds a lotus in his right hand. Note the small double-sloped roofs of the miniature shrines similar to those topping bell handles in Kullu valley.

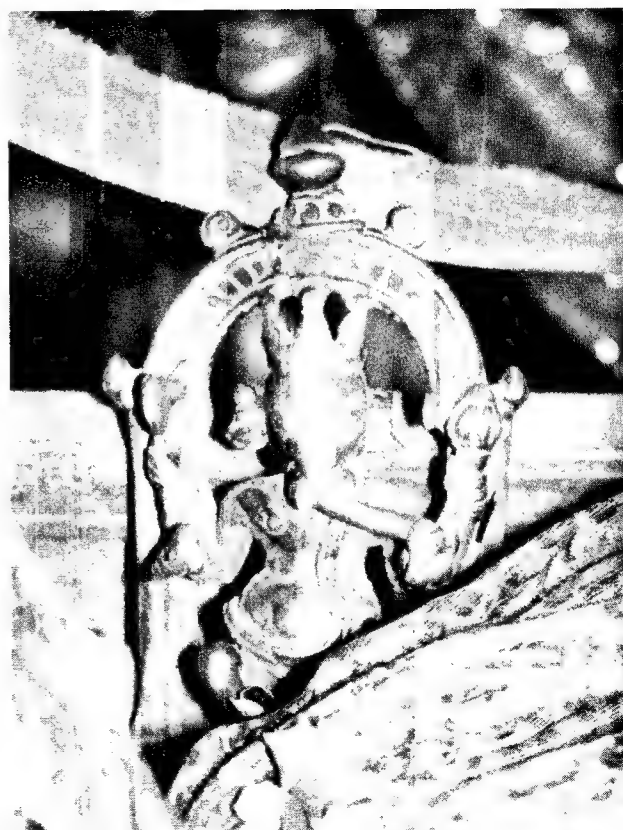


Fig. 226. Gaṇeśa. Brass. Ramachandra temple, Manikarn (Kullu), early folkish style. Mid thirteenth century. Note the mace held in the left upper hand, the design of which can comparatively be either an interpretation of the lotus bud or inversely. The crown is more typical of Chamba.



Fig. 227. *Ganeśa*. Brass, 18 cm. Beas. Fourteenth century. *Paraśurāma* temple (Nirmand). The star that tops the *prabhā* derives from a similar rosette topping the *prabhā* in *Chamba* and *Lahaul*. Note the lotus treated as a small umbrella, the studded, conical cap-shaped crown and epigastric belt, the patched navel and the former cross-bar finials protruding in a very low position.

Fig. 228. Front and back views of *Ganeśa*. Brass, 9.5 cm. Beas. Fourteenth-fifteenth century. Conical cap, lotus, patched navel, star topping the *prabhā*, *udarabandha* or epigastric belt. At the left is the rat; at the right, what seems to be a lion. The sacrificial thread appears on the right shoulder. The feet of the base, as already noted in later brasses from the Middle Sutlej, are still provided with a small ring that joins the lower moulding of the concave lower profile. The back displays a rather heavy casting as metal does not seem to have been as scarce as in the Middle Sutlej. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

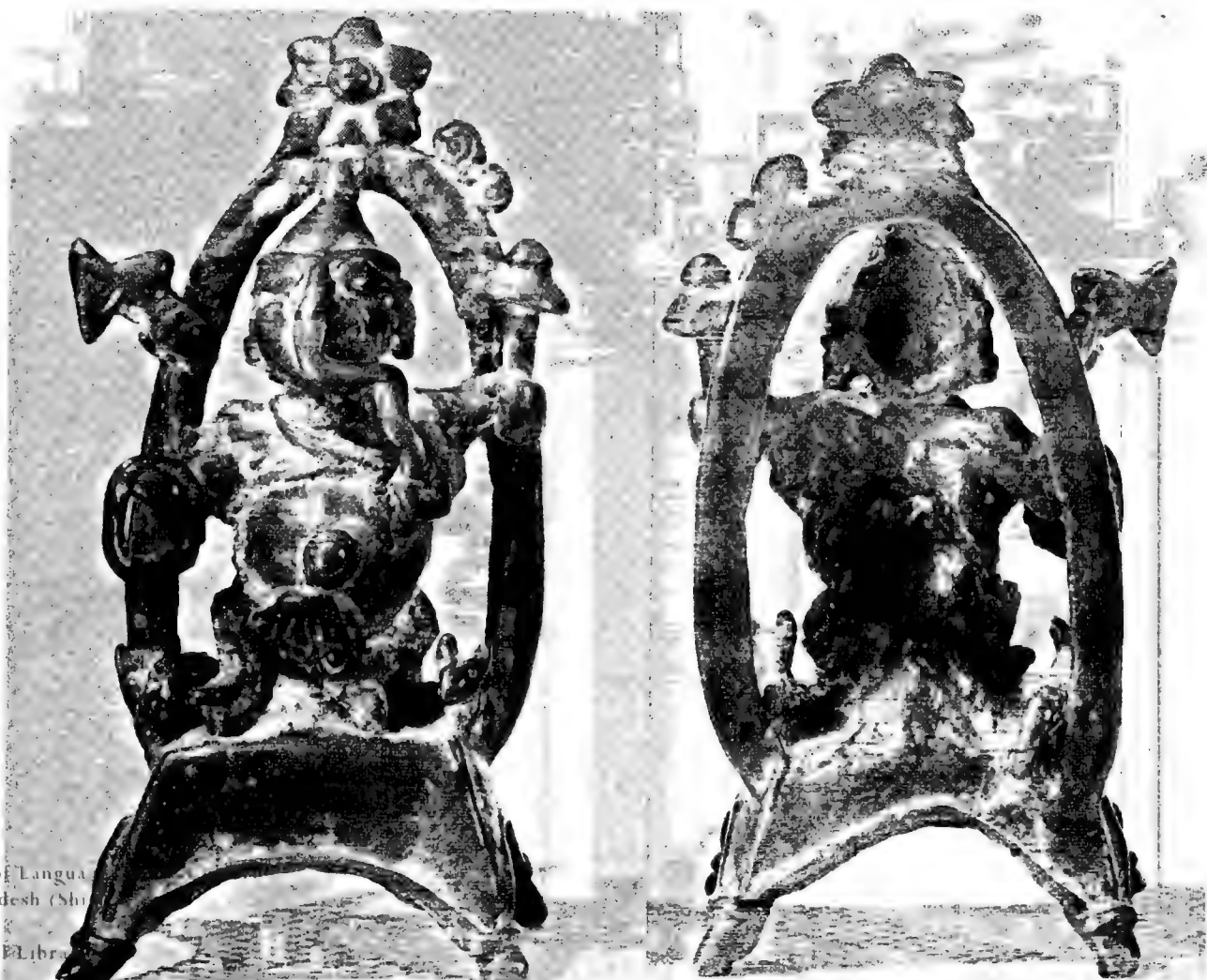


Fig. 229. *Ganeśa*. Brass, ca 10 cm. Beas. Fifteenth century.

Although of a less crude workmanship, this brass is typical of the later folkish style of the fifteenth century: fish-shaped eyes, high forehead with the cap suggested by its lower rim. The inverted S-shaped ears are typical of Kullu and the trunk shorter and stiff; legs are treated as a roll and the moulded base here reaches its final evolution where the ringed feet have lost their function as stands. The belly is fully emphasized, with a patched navel, extremely low nipples and a curious thread passing from under the right arm-pit across the belly. The *udarabandha* is now placed higher, at arm-pit level. The anatomy of the torso has become completely incoherent as the caster merely reproduces patterns without obviously being aware of their significance. (Private collection.)



Fig. 231. *Umā-Maheśvara*. Brass, Beas. Fourteenth century. A

typical further deviation from the preceding group: big oval or almond-shaped eyes, thick lips, round faces with no forehead, patched nipples, breasts and navels. Necks are studded. Above the tympanum, the *cakra* of the *prabhāvali* has, quite logically, been interpreted as a lotus and is accordingly put in an erect position as in Fig. 220, I. Pilasters are engraved with chevrons. A curious feature near the top of the pilaster at the right of *Maheśvara* could derive from the sun and moon motif already noticed in brasses of the Middle Sutlej; if so, it would then be an incorrect position for the crescent. Published in *Aryan, Folk Bronzes of North-Western India*, No. 38. (Courtesy Dr. P. Malet.)

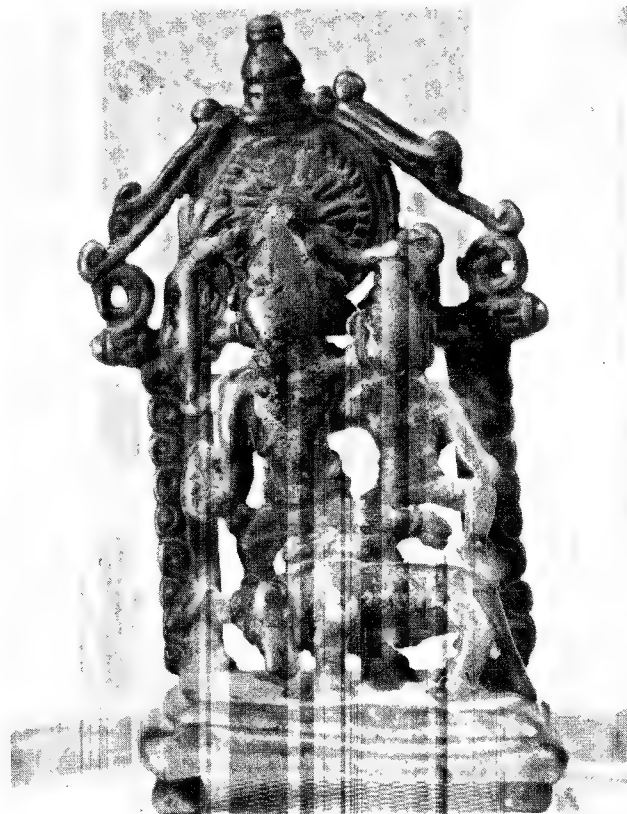


Fig. 230. *Umā-Maheśvara*. Brass, 10.5 cm. Beas or Middle Sutlej. Late thirteenth century or early fourteenth century. This group clearly derives from Figs. 202 and 203 or from any related classical prototype. The pilasters are adorned with a row of spirals, a favourite motif of Kullu valley though not exclusive, as also the double sloped tympanum. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)





Fig. 232. Viṣṇu (?). Brass, 13 cm. Beas. Late fourteenth century. Here the spiral prevails in the ornamentation and the inverted S-shaped ears. The heavy garland is rarely to be seen in Kullu or even in eastern Himachal Pradesh. The moulded plinth of the base is cased with chevrons. Note the small moulding at the top of the feet which soon becomes a ring as the feet slip sideways. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 233. Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī. Brass, 20.3 cm. Beas. Late fourteenth-early fifteenth century. Durgā's head starts becoming elongated while her smiling mouth tends to develop the later typical V-shape and her eyes become fish-shaped. The discus is striped as it is usually in the Cis-Sutlej group. The Mahiṣāsura theme of the Beas must of course have been under the influence of the Middle Sutlej. Note also the studded neck (instead of being ringed) and the plain skirt ending in an oblique moulding, while the scarf is reduced to an almost unnoticeable pattern. The belt has been tentatively interpreted in quite a realistic manner, being secured by a flat knot. The base is unusually elaborate with its three moulded plinths. But the round face of Mahiṣa is typical of Kullu, with almond-shaped eyes and thick, childish lips (compare with Fig. 234). This brass, although already late, might have been cast after one of the many circulating Mahiṣāsura brasses of the Middle Sutlej. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)



Fig. 234. Prahlāda (?). Brass, 7.5 cm. Beas. Late fourteenth century. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

Fig. 235. Two devotees (?). Brass, 6.5 cm. Beas. Early fifteenth century.



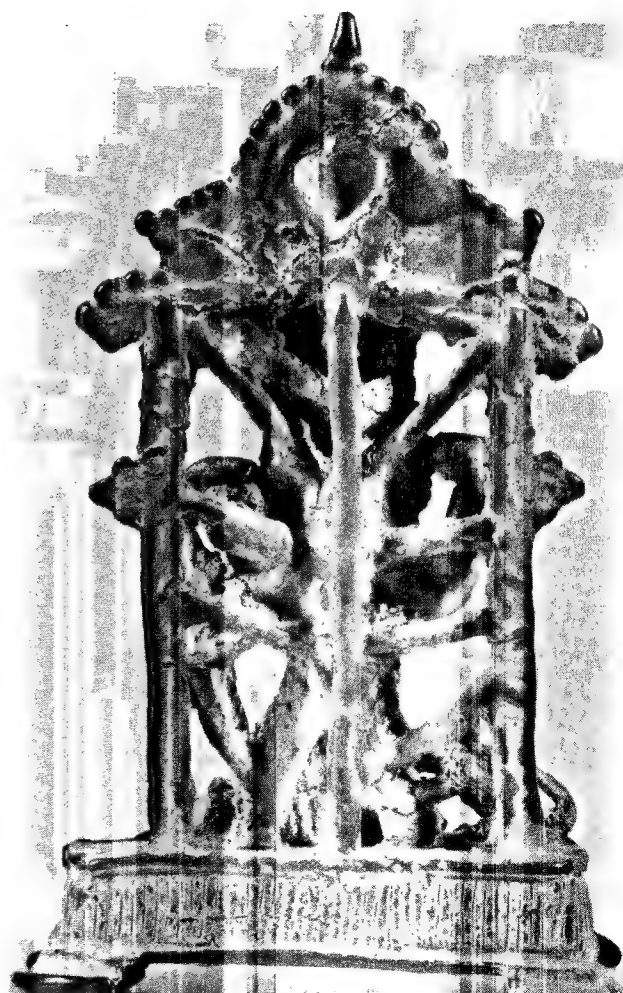


Fig. 236. Front and back views of Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī. Brass, 24 cm. Beas or Middle Sutlej (Nirath). Late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. A heavy cast (see the back) brass, hence we believe it to be from Kullu rather than from Nirath where brasses were of a light cast. Elongated face with projecting chin and cheek-bones, fish-shaped eyes but a still relatively low forehead. The base is vertically striped as is the skirt. The technique made much use of wax dhuns of different thickness, and earrings, crown and prabhā and heavily studded with thick pearls. The neck is ringed as in the Middle Sutlej. Note the projecting finials of the dropped cross-bar that are placed in a relatively low position. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 237. Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī. Brass. Beas or Cis-Sutlej. Fifteenth century. Oval face and high forehead. Note the spiralled volutes on the arched background reduced to two parallel rolls and the cakra that becomes a surmounting umbrella as in Fig. 231.



Fig. 238. Front and back views of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Brass, 16.5 cm. Beas. Late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Another heavy cast brass after a classical prototype or possibly even an earlier folkish prototype made after several different classical ones, the main stylistic current of which seems to come from Chamba (Garuda holds a pot and the pīṭha is provided with a mālā). The lower part of the bust still retains a classical profile as do also the ringed pillars cased with chevrons. The prabhāvali is reduced to a concave crescent. The mace is of a classical variety, but is as long as a spear, a feature lasting up to the present in brasses and wood carvings. Heads are rounded, foreheads low or merging with the eyebrows. The whole group is slightly out of axis due to the presence of Lakṣmī. Viṣṇu's crown of the Chamba variety. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 241. Garuda. Brass, ca 5 cm. Beas. Fourteenth-fifteenth century. From a bell handle.

Fig. 242. Garuda. Brass, ca 5 cm. Beas. Fourteenth-sixteenth century. Bhuntar (Kullu). This Garuda tops a bell handle and in its face (long nose, pointed chin, prominent cheek-bones), we see a mixture of the end of the first folkish phase with patterns more specific to the modern period which started in the late fifteenth and in the early sixteenth century.



Fig. 239. *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa*, Brass, 20.5 cm. Beas. Late thirteenth century or early fourteenth century (possibly later). Another similar group, but cast after a classical U.P. prototype with elements adapted to the Beas style (crown and lotus). Note how *Garuda* has eight arms: two arms in *añjali*, human legs in *pralambapādāsana* (that is, seated in the European way), and lateral claws appearing under the wings. The two attendants hold fly-whisks. The heavy base is still of the early folkish type with a small roll moulding the joint between plinth and feet. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 240. *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa*. Brass, ca 25 cm. Beas. Fifteenth to seventeenth century. Shrine of Sarsai (Kullu). Despite the poor quality of the photograph, one can easily relate this brass to the previous one. Both are indeed identical and it is clear that both emanate from the same classical prototype. This one, to judge from the engravings on the base, might have been cast at a much later date, as late, perhaps, as the seventeenth century, hence the doubt we have expressed about a possibly later date for Fig. 239.

Fig. 243. *Durgā*. Brass, 12.5 cm. Beas. Late fourteenth-early fifteenth century. A quite "uncommon" brass of Kullu valley in which many stylistic patterns of Chamba can be seen: crown, ringed mace, scarf trailing from behind the crown down to the shoulders and interpreted as locks of hair. However, the chased chevron on the base, the studded neck of *Durgā*, the long, beaked noses and the umbrella-like finial are typical patterns of the Beas. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)



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## D — THE CIS-SUTLEJ GROUP

VARIOUS BRASSES have been found which share to a variable extent the characteristics of both the Middle Sutlej group and the Beas group. Some similar brasses, or stylistically related *mohras*, have been observed at various places situated to the south of the Sutlej, that is, roughly around Simla and parts of the former small Simla Hill States. Their exact location is still conjectural but their stylistical and morphological evolution completely tallies with those of the other two groups.

The salient features — if any — of this group are:

- iconographic manifestations of Viṣṇu and Hari-Hara;
- a rather rough and crude tentatively classical "realism" in the earliest folkish production, similar to that of the Middle Sutlej;
- a trend towards over-ornamentation with various designs such as the spiral, discus, star, lozenge, pearl, ringed sections, lily pattern, flower, cross and an often recurrent, inverted and rounded V-shaped motif — all these elements occurring singly or combined with one or more;
- this, in turn, emphasizes the "application" technique of all small accessories and ornamental elements that are separately made in wax, many of them by means of thin

threads of wax, and then soldered to the main wax image;

- the chests are often overemphasized;
- Viṣṇu's or Durgā's discus is hollowed and frequently striped;
- Viṣṇu's mace is confused with a spear, the shaft of which is ringed;
- the facial features (high forehead, arched eyebrows) are similar to those generally observed in the Middle Sutlej group but, as is the case with later folkish *mohras*, the cheeks and chin tend to get hypertrophied;
- ears are designed quite naturally and evolve in the shape of a cashew-nut or a double spiral which is exactly the same motif that is inherent to the Beas group, but inverted, thus assuming the shape of an S;
- in later works, the vaulted arch with an inscribed discus is often shaped like a tympanum topped by a discus that may even surmount the lateral angles;
- sometimes a mask or *mohra* is placed against the base of one or even both the pillars.

Curiously, it seems that the production of this group culminated in a true folkish creative process in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, and we discuss this matter in the caption relating to Fig. 258.



Fig. 245. *Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini*. Brass, 17 cm. Cis-Sutlej or Middle Sutlej (Nirmand). Early fourteenth century. We have already discussed at length the progressive alteration of the gaja-yāli pattern into more or less purely geometrical designs like the one appearing here on the side of the pillars. This brass could just as well have originated in Nirmand, but we would rather think of another provenance: the crown seems to be more related to Chamba via Kullu (or possibly also Kangra) and the pattern of the gaja-yāli is already too abstract and totally misinterpreted. A contemporary prototype from Nirmand, similar, perhaps, to one of the many *Durgās* as in Fig. 204, is likely to have been taken for a model. Note, however, the absence of the small scarf, the difference in the design of the skirt, the way the right foot is placed on the buffalo. (Private collection.)



Fig. 244. *Hari-Hara*. Brass, Cis-Sutlej or Beas. Mid thirteenth century. Simla Museum. An early interpretation of a classical prototype from U.P., still displaying the realistic trend of classicism. Attributes — from upper left hand, clockwise: lotus (already assuming the umbrella shape), conch, unidentified circular object (discus or *mālā*?), *aṅkuṣa* or trident. At the feet of the attendants: *liṅga* and offerings, a curious feature of H.P. as this would be more common in the Deccan. The moulded base is classical and is provided with a small *nāla*. Note the ringed belt.

If this brass is genuine and not a modern creation, the *liṅga* and the offerings on the base point to this icon as a possible prototype, a faker has adopted into many faked "Kullū" brasses:

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Fig. 246. *Durgā Maḥiśāsūramardini*. Brass, 17.5 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Mid fourteenth century. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand. Note the heavy chest with patched breasts, the necklace loaded with petals, the striped discus, the spear topped by a heavy trident and the thick pommel of the sword.

Fig. 248. *Durgā Maḥiśāsūramardini*. Brass, Cis- or Middle Sutlej. Mid fourteenth century. (Courtesy Dr. P. Malet.)



Fig. 247. *Durgā Maḥiśāsūramardini*. Brass, 16 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Late fourteenth century. Same remarks as for Fig. 246. (Private collection.)

Fig. 249. *Durgā Maḥiśāsūramardini*. Brass, 14 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Late fourteenth century or early fifteenth century. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand. Note the inverted V-shaped motif on the base as detailed in Fig. 250 which also occurs in many other brasses of this stylistic group. Note also the chevrons that fit into each other on the skirt and the studded arris at the corner of the base. *Maḥiṣa* is apparently ithyphallic.





Fig. 252. Front and back view of Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini. Brass, 19 cm. Cis-Sutlej or Beas. Late fourteenth to early fifteenth century. Elongation of the face commences, ears are inverted, S spirals of the Beas type, but the inverted V-shaped motif appears on the skirt. The projecting ends of the cross-bar appear midway in the height of the pillars. Ringed neck, belt and spear. The cast, as can be seen from the rear, is of a light variety, thus requiring the presence of many pins to secure the icon to the background.



Fig. 250. The inverted V-shaped motif on the front of the base of Fig. 249.



Fig. 251. Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardini. Brass, 17 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Fifteenth century. A typical product of the later folkish style: elongated face, long nose, fish-shaped eyes, V-shaped smile and relatively high forehead. Base and background can be linked to those of Fig. 213, both deriving, perhaps, from an earlier folkish or late classical prototype. Although late, this work still adheres coherently to the classical prototype, to judge from the cross-bar and its projections and the correct position of the prabhāvali. Note the two studded necklaces, the lower one with a central pendant, the ringed belt, the patched navel and the heavy oblique rincels of the skirt. The cast is heavy. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)





Fig. 253. Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī. Brass, 14.5 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Fifteenth century. But for the ears treated as cashew-nuts and a more pointed chin, the head matches that of the preceding brass. The skirt is also similar as is the emphasis on the breasts. Note the necklace with a central pendant to the right of Durgā, a human figure appears inside the lower loop, possibly an attendant of Mahiṣa, apparently attacking the lion. (Courtesy Mr. & Mrs. H. K. Swali, Bombay.)



Fig. 255. Viṣṇu. Detail of a wooden pillar in Janog, temple B. Cis-Sutlej. Seventeenth century. This wooden pillar gives us a clue concerning the attribution of the brasses under discussion to the hills of the Cis-Sutlej. However, it is interesting to note that the style of brass icons and mohras underwent a drastic stylistic renewal in the last fifteenth or in the early sixteenth century, wood carvings still maintained the same stylistic characteristics although in a progressively drier mannerism so that one could start a retrogressive stylistic analysis from dated or datable wood carvings of the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries down to the sixteenth and possibly even the fifteenth century to arrive at a matching point with the brass icons. Viṣṇu has furthermore a small lotus bud (or what is taken for it), a hollowed discus and a huge dagger instead of the conch. Compare the wings of Garuḍa with those of Fig. 257.

Fig. 254. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Brass, 20.5 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Mid fifteenth century. This brass, stylistically very similar to both the preceding ones and hence contemporary, enables an approach to a group of curious Vaiṣṇava icons and a Durgā, all characterized by a trend towards over-ornamentation. Two very striking features are the row of five inverted hooked V on the moulded base and the variety of ornaments placed on and against the arch, many of the latter being a mere repetition of the projecting finial of the former cross-bar. Viṣṇu sits on Garuḍa which looks more like a peacock, and has a third eye; instead of the mace, he holds an inverted trident. Facial features are those of the Middle Sutlej in its later phase; the ears, however, are of the cashew-nut variety. Viṣṇu (if not a form of Skanda) apparently wears a dhoti in the South Indian fashion, but if we refer to Figs. 255 and 257 we will understand how this came to be a misinterpretation of the extended wings of the bird. A comparison with Fig. 256 would even enable us to conclude that in the present instance the belt has been reproduced twice and to deduce that the present icon is hence later than Fig. 257. In Fig. 256, Viṣṇu even holds a mace which is here interpreted as a spear. Note furthermore the long beaked noses and Lakṣmī's skirt with the herring-bone motif. This brass has been published by Aryan, Rural Art of Western Himalayas, No. 48.





Fig. 256. Viṣṇu. Brass, Cis-Sutlej. Second half of the fourteenth century. Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. A late folkish adaptation of a classical prototype (or another very similar one) from which the previous brass was adapted. See discussion on Fig. 254. Here, perhaps, we can find a possible origin of the inverted hooked V motif so often observed in the stylized foliated pattern between the cross-bar and the prabhavali, which seem to have been used as a mere ornament on the bases. Five such motifs are displayed here, together with two circular patches which would formerly have been linked with a sun and moon symbolism. The way the feet of the base are designed provides us with further evidence of the anteriority of this brass to Fig. 254.

Fig. 257. Front and back views of Durgā (?) or Viṣṇu (?). Brass, 30 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. The identification is doubtful as we most probably have to deal with a local syncretism. However, the mask and the third eye seem to add a strong flavour of "Saktism". Compare the projecting finials of the absent cross-bars with the similar pattern appearing in Fig. 254, to which this brass is anterior, or is at least of a different provenance: almond-shaped eyes, already moving, however, towards the more elongated fish-shaped eye, clear distinction between the paridhāna and the wings of the bird (feathers ending in a spiral) epigastric belt, ringed neck. At the base of the pillar, to the left of the deity, is a mohra the features of which match those seen in mohras which we also date to about 1400. A.D. Sixteen heads appear on the pillars and slopes, and a differently striped discus at the top suggests a sun rather than a discus. Note the pattern of the elements of the crown which also occurs in the two previous brasses and in Fig. 251. The base is also of a type earlier than Fig. 254. (Courtesy Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, University of East Anglia.)





Fig. 260. Durgā. Brass, 19 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Second half of the fifteenth century. Studded neck, the ears of mohras at the base of the pillars, spear held in the upper left arm, high forehead and hypertrophied chin and cheek-bones as in the latest Cis-Sutlej mohras. The base and the lion-buffalo group are reduced to their simplest expression. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)

Fig. 259. Viṣṇu (?). Brass, 17 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Mid fifteenth century. A cruder and more popular specimen of the same stylistic group. Masks are suggested at the base of the pillars and the same pattern appears where the slopes and pillars meet. The feet of the base are almost completely atrophied. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

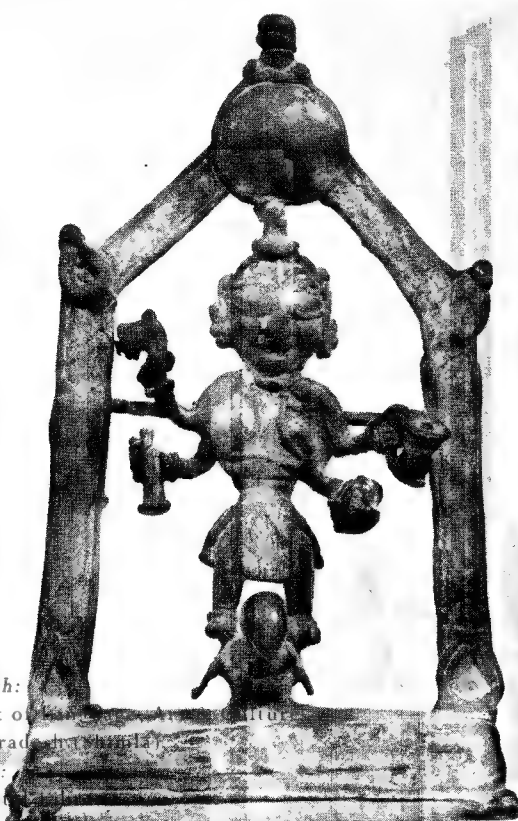


Fig. 258. Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardini. Brass, 32 cm. Cis-Sutlej.

About 1400 .. The most "florid" of all the brasses of H.P. hitherto known to us, displaying the creative variety in the brasses of H.P. in the late folkish phase that culminated in the late fourteenth and the early fifteenth century. We can only surmise that such an artistic boom must have resulted from a considerable economic boost when, after the Mongols calmed down in Central Asia, a new impetus was given to trade exchanges between east and west through the former western part of the Silk Road in which the western Himachali hill states and, above all, the Kullu valley, were important stages. As in the case of Fig. 257, the almond-shaped eyes already display a trend toward the later fish shape and the forehead is still in an evolutive phase. Note, in this respect, the evolution of the third eye from the losenge, as in the present case, to an elongated design as in Fig. 254. Note how the buffalo and the lion are reduced to quite insignificant dimensions. Such works give the impression that the artists were freed from the care hitherto required to interpret early folkish and late classical prototypes, and reached quite an original and true folkish creative maturity of which this brass is the best example. (Courtesy Prof. Samuel Eillenberg.)

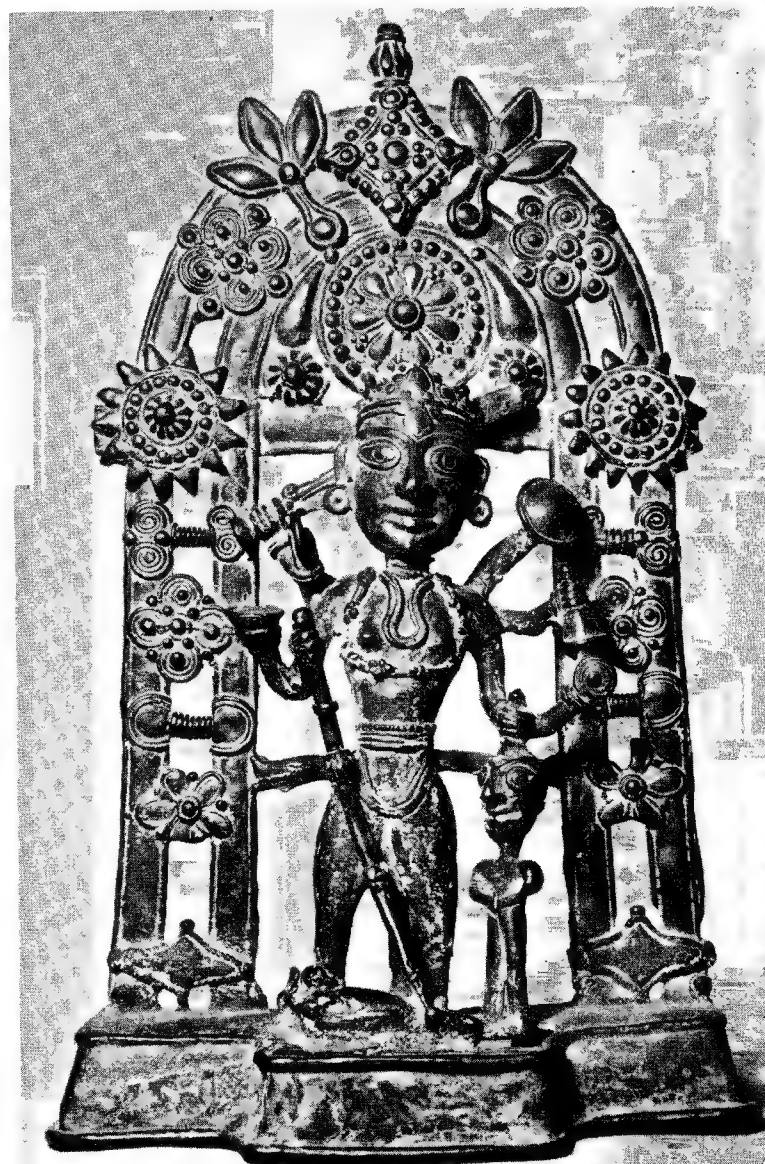






Fig. 261. Ganeśa. Brass, 11.5 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Early fourteenth century. On the whole, this brass still clings to earlier classical prototypes in quite a coherent way. Note the "cashew-nut ears", the central protuberance and also a smaller post-temporal protuberance on either side. The navel is suggested by a chased guilloche. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

Fig. 263. Ganeśa. Brass, 6 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Ca 1400 .. Ganeśa sits on a lion while two rats face a central hook-shaped motif on the base. Attributes are hardly recognizable: the lotus looks like a shield, the sweets like a godrooned melon, the axe like a flag. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 262. Ganeśa. Brass, 8.5 cm. Cis-Sutlej or Beas. Late fourteenth century. Morphological and structural links with the preceding Ganeśa are evident at least in the background. The ears are most natural but the small post-temporal protuberances are now apparently treated as eyeballs. The lower profile of the base still retains a post-classical look with the central, almost completely atrophied cul-de-lampe. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

Fig. 264. Ganeśa. Brass, 15.2 cm. Cis-Sutlej or Middle Sutlej. First half of the fifteenth century. Long-ringed neck, patch-like nipples and navel, high forehead with a losenge like third eye, fish-shaped eyes, studded discs, small lotus bud of the Beas variety but looking rather like a mace. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)





## THE MODERN PHASE IN EASTERN HIMACHAL (Sixteenth to Twentieth Century)

ALTHOUGH IT WOULD appear that the eastern school held up production with the close of the fifteenth century, Kullu, perhaps, even more than Chamba, continued to produce brasses until recently, just as *mohras* are still cast or embossed. This modern production bears both close anatomical and stylistic similarities with the many stone statues which were made in the newly built town of Mandi in the sixteenth century. Stone sculptures of the same style were collected near Naggar by N. Roerich and are still kept in his former property there, which has been converted into an art gallery since his passing away. As Naggar remained the capital of Kullu until it was shifted to Sultanpur in about 1660, one may well assume that this new style was superimposed on the more folkish and traditional one, like that of the fifteenth and early fourteenth century memorial stele that still lie near the funeral ground of Naggar. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a period when Kullu was emancipated from the Ladakhi rulers and got involved in wars—and also cultural exchanges—with the newly founded town of Mandi. New shrines were built or old stones restored and these had to be provided with new icons. M. Singh has published many examples of this style that originated in Mandi in his *Himalayan Art*, pp. 132, 139, 141 and 145. This style, represented by the larger brass

icons worshipped in shrines like the one at Sarsai and others, is characterized by:

- a greater anatomical realism together with an obvious elongation of the torso and limbs, ears are more naturally designed as in Fig. 220, D (three last types);
- oval or pearl-shaped faces with heavy cheeks and almond-shaped, protruding eyes, a rather pointed nose and a small, pouting mouth over a well defined chin; a stylistical link with Chamba's contemporary brasses seems evident;
- plain cast *rondes bosses* with an almost simple, flattened base;
- whether small or large, all these brasses share a striking powerful monumental quality;
- some of them could almost be confused with Bengali brasses of the same period.

As in the previous period, images of Garuḍa are quite numerous but many of them kneeling with the *añjali* gesture on a high, stair-shaped pedestal or on a rounded *piedouche* are integrated in lamp-stands (Figs. 276 to 280). The wings are elaborated to a greater extent, with protruding feathers.

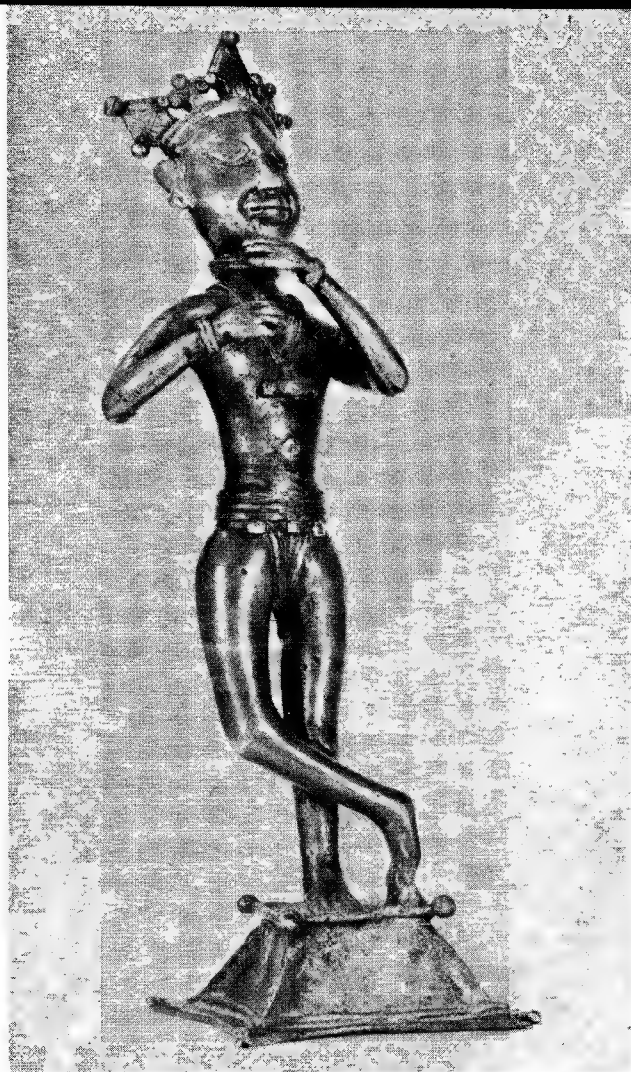


Fig. 265. Venugopāla. Brass, 25.5 cm. Eastern H.P. Early sixteenth century. Although this brass still retains some stylistic features specific to the end of the medieval folkish production (ringed neck and belt, long face and nose, patched navel and small trapezoidal base deriving from the latest type seen in Fig. 260), the elongation of the limbs and the anatomical slenderness are the most evident changes. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)

Fig. 266. Front and back view of Gaṇeśa. Brass, 9.5 cm. Eastern H.P., probably Kullu. Sixteenth-seventeenth century. A rather curious brass in which Gaṇeśa appears seated on a small stool, wearing mojṛī or shoes with tips curved upwards, and ghuṅghrus or periscelides with bells. He carries an aṅkuśa instead of an axe and has an atrophied śiraścakra on the sinciput. The rat rises towards the sweets placed on the left knee. More perturbing are the armlets which are in a normal high position despite the date which is either too late or too early for such a pattern. This brass, which we have personally handled and investigated, is genuine and a fake has to be ruled out. Factors on which we rely in our attribution to sixteenth century H.P. are: the crown, third eye, large, protruding eyeballs, the long, sinuous trunk, the small lotus bud in the lower right hand which still has a morphological though atrophied link with the former umbrella-shaped lotus, the flat base. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)





Fig. 267. Durgā. Brass. Eastern H.P., probably Kullu. Sixteenth-seventeenth century. Kullu crown, hollowed discus, studded neck and belt. (Courtesy Dr. P. Malet.)



Fig. 268. Durgā. Brass, 10.5 cm. Eastern H.P., Kullu or Chamba. Sixteenth-seventeenth century. From the seventeenth century onwards, limbs tend to shorten. The way the face with pointed chin is tilted backwards, and the flat muzzle of the lion, are more typical of Chamba. The crown, however, is typical of Kullu. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

Fig. 269. Durgā. Brass, 9.5 cm. Eastern H.P., probably Kullu. Seventeenth century. Crown and hollowed discus. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 270. Durgā. Brass, 11 cm. Eastern H.P., probably Kullu. Sixteenth-seventeenth century. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)





Fig. 271. *Narasimha*. Brass, 5.5 cm. Eastern H.P. Seventeenth-eighteenth century. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 272. *Maheshvara*. Brass, 10 cm. Eastern H.P. Seventeenth century. (Private collection.)

Fig. 273. *Garuda topping a bell-handle*. Brass. Kullu. Fifteenth-sixteenth century. Manikarn, Rāmacandra temple.



Fig. 274. *Garuda topping a bell-handle*. Brass. Kullu. Sixteenth century. Note the snake held in the claws and the pot in the hands. (Private collection.)







Fig. 275. Garuḍa. Brass, 7 cm. Eastern H.P. Sixteenth-seventeenth century. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)

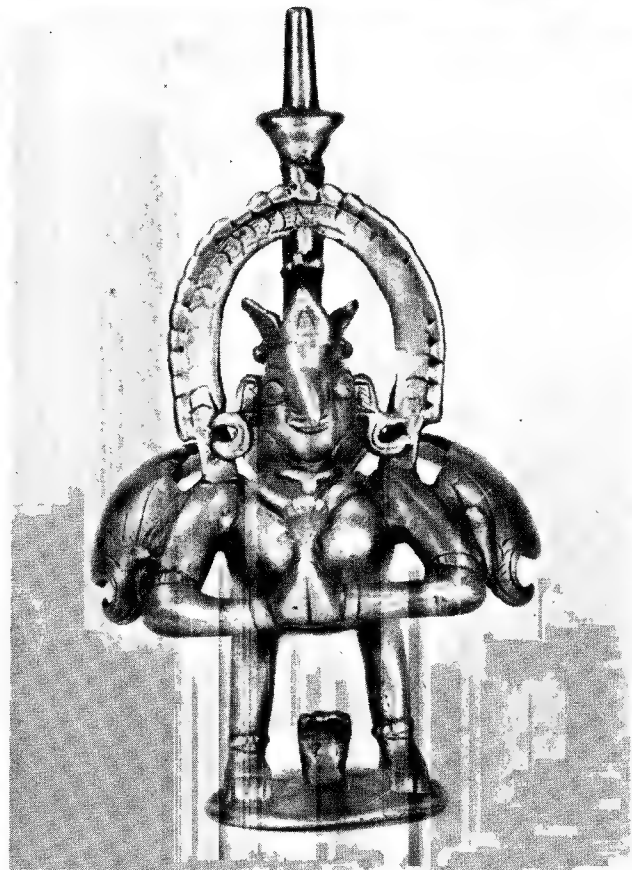


Fig. 276. Garuḍa as a lamp-stand. Brass, 18 cm. Eastern H.P., probably Kullu. Seventeenth century (?). (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)



Fig. 277. Garuḍa. Brass, 5.5 cm. Eastern H.P. Seventeenth-eighteenth century. Paraśurāma temple, Nirmand. With these four last icons of Garuḍa which follow, we reach a particular form related to the brass variety of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa of Sarsai (Figs. 239 and 240) in which we have shown claws projecting laterally from under Garuḍa's wings. Here Garuḍa kneels in añjali with a spherical object at the tip of his fingers (a deviation of the pot-carrying-Garuḍa of Chamba). Between his legs fall the folds of the paridhāna. A small snake protrudes from under the right foot. The nose becomes increasingly beaked. The former claws are now interpreted as folds of a dopattā. The two-tiered moulded base is becoming common to Garuḍa. Engravings are very common in these later brasses.



Fig. 278. Garuḍa as a lamp-stand. Brass, 13 cm. Eastern H.P., Kullu. Sixteenth century. The base with feet and the face with fish-shaped eyes are still close to late fifteenth century brasses. Note how the claws are interpreted as a pair of snakes projecting from under the wings. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 279. Garuḍa as a lamp-stand. Brass, 25.5 cm. Eastern H.P., probably Kullu. Eighteenth century. The elements of the crown and the beaked nose are increasingly emphasized. The former claws are now completely misinterpreted as a purely ornamental, folded, non-functional pattern having no further connection with either claws, snakes or dopaṭṭā. Note the two-tiered base and the upper diabol-shaped pedestal. (Courtesy Dr. Leo Figiel.)

Fig. 281. Gaṇeśa and Durgā. Brasses, about 10 cm. Cis-Sutlej. Twentieth century. Kṛṣṇa temple, Lafughat. Small modern folk bronzes under worship.



Fig. 280. Garuḍa as a lamp-stand. Brass, 25 cm. Eastern H.P., probably Kullu. Eighteenth-nineteenth century. The final stage of the later folkish style, with feathers projecting like arrow heads. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



## PART THREE : MOHRAS





CHAPTER XIII

PART THREE  
**MOHRAS FROM THE SUTLEJ  
AND BEAS**  
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

SOME TWENTY YEARS ago, the art market started to diffuse small figures, cast in brass (which was then commonly labelled as bronze), of an elongated smiling face bearing a striking resemblance to those of the Kouroi and Koré of the late archaic period of Greek sculpture in Attica (Athens) of the late sixth and early fifth century B.C. Most of them were of a small and narrow type, obviously folkish, and were said to come from Kullu or Chamba. Although there are now many of them in both public and private collections all over the world, they are currently seldom seen in Kullu and none of them seem to have ever been kept in Chamba. As was the case with brass icons, Simla has been the spot where these items were collected from the hills and exported from their homeland. A dozen at the most of larger dimensions and of a quite classical look were, until presently, known in collections abroad.

They were called *devatās* (gods) or "masks" (*mohras*), notwithstanding the fact that physically, morphologically and technically they never were intended to serve as facial masks. Most of them were too small (their average height ranges from about five to twenty cm.) and, further, none were provided with apertures for the eyes and breathing. Moreover, since in most cases at least, the upper part of the torso was depicted, the label "mask" has definitely to be discarded and replaced by a more

accurate term such as "bust" which better suits both their morphology and function. However, as the term "bust" might also give rise to some confusion, we prefer to adhere to the correct indigenous term *mohra*, which in Hindi and in the Pahari dialect means a mask but is applied specifically to these busts. Most of them were believed to date between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, but no grounds or evidence for such dates have ever been put forward, nor has any serious attempt been made to link them either to classical or local folk art. Until recently, it was even unknown that most *mohras* still kept in their homeland were embossed in silver plates and that the older they seem to be, the more seldom they are found.

The reason for this is twofold:

- (1) If many of the small folkish *mohras* were sold out of their homeland, only a dozen of the larger classical variety came to be known outside;
- (2) A persistent habit—and one that was confirmed to us repeatedly by local informants—consists even today of melting old *mohras* to make new ones.

Geographically, their localization is confined to:

- (1) The Beas river, both Mandi and Kullu being

their main gathering centres, at the Śivarātri and *Dussehra* fairs, respectively;

- (2) The Middle Sutlej, where they are still worshipped in shrines in Behena, Bail, Nirmand, Sarahan, etc.;
- (3) The Cis-Sutlej or former Simla Hills States.

No *mohras* are found in the Chamba valley (with the exception of one in Chhatradi and two others, quite recent, in the Cāmuṇḍā temple, Chamba town and the shrine facing the Hiḍimbā temple in Mehla), and although that of Śujunīdevī and Suhīdevī constitute evidence of the worship of torsos rather than *mohras* proper in ancient times, we were repeatedly informed that no *mohras* were either kept or worshipped in the Chamba valley as far as memory goes.

We are thus confronted with an identical production common to the three main stylistic groups of eastern Himachal Pradesh, differentiated, however, by some features that are not necessarily stylistic:

**Beas and Cis-Sutlej Regions:** By far the most dense numerical concentration of recent *mohras*, for the most part generally embossed in silver or copper; some are, of course, also cast and among them there are still a few ancient ones of the narrow variety. They are normally affixed on *rathas* or palanquins, even when kept in their own shrines. We estimate those we saw in the Kullu and Mandi fairs and in other places at about a thousand.

**Middle Sutlej Region:** Numerically much inferior, but, as compared to the embossed *mohras*, the cast ones are of a more classical and undoubtedly a more ancient style. They are usually hung separately on the walls of the shrines, but some of them participate in the *Dussehra* fair in Kullu and have consequently to be fixed upon a *ratha*. We estimate those we saw in this region at about 150 only, but almost all of them were ancient.

As a rule, they are never isolated but kept in groups ranging from four, rarely less, up to more than twenty, and the group belongs specifically to a shrine the name of which it bears. Sometimes the same shrine may own two or even three separate groups. As one village can have several shrines, some villages are represented by more than one group.

There are two varieties of *rathas* or palanquins used in the Beas and Cis-Sutlej regions: a four-sided *ratha*, and the larger, one-sided *ratha*.

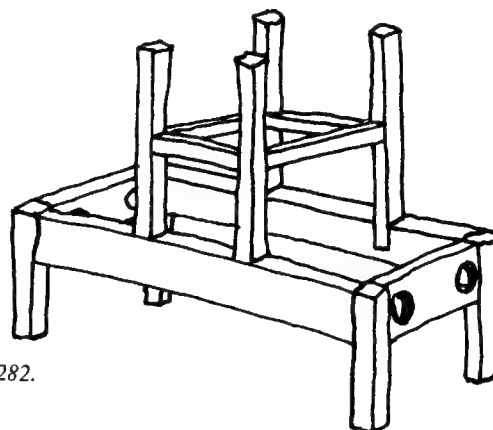


Fig. 282.

The four-sided *ratha* (Fig. 282) consists of a base into which loose shafts are inserted, supporting a four-sided cubical structure, each side being provided with one or two *mohras* placed vertically. This kind of *ratha* is thus equipped to carry four or eight *mohras*.

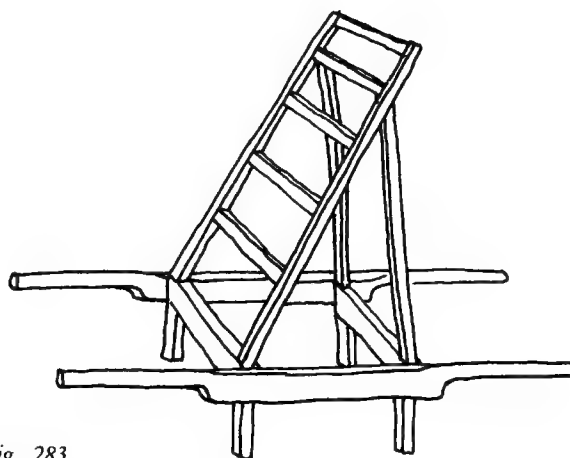


Fig. 283.

The one-sided *ratha* (Fig. 283) consists mainly of a framed trapezoid or oblong slope fixed upon two parallel beams provided with four feet. The *mohras* are fixed in horizontal tiers, the lower one being larger, so as to form a kind of pyramid, usually assembling between ten and sixteen *mohras* or even more.

In both cases, the inner wooden structure is covered with brocaded silk and cotton and surmounted by a dome sometimes filled with yak hair, and an umbrella.



Fig. 284. A four-sided ratha of Lageshri (Kullu) at the Kullu Dussehra of 1982.

The objective of these *mohras* is, of course worship, but, as far as their identification is concerned, they are the outcome of the condensation of several imported epic, puranic and agamic traditions and local cults of divinised chieftains, kings and heroes:

- as a rule, all the *mohras* belonging to the same group collectively bear the name of the tutelary deity of the shrine to which the *ratha* belongs;
- their most common identification is either Śiva Mahādeva or Umādevī, or a Nāga, as many of them are obviously related to snake-worship (snakes are indeed often depicted on their chest);
- as for the snakes, related both to fertility and the dead (their realm is the underworld where deceased spirits are supposed to dwell), they might also reflect ancient fertility cults of



Fig. 285. A one-sided ratha of Bail (Middle Sutlej). The top mohra is later classical of the late twelfth century while the two lower rows are later classical of the thirteenth and early folkish of the late thirteenth and fourteenth century. The two middle rows are embossed silver mohras ranging from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

- Mother Earth of the Demeter type which merged with the Śākta cult of Umā-Pārvaṭī;
- local traditions also identify the *mohras* with ṛṣis and heroes (*vīras*) who could indeed be deified figures of local chieftains and tribal ancestors. Wooden masks of deified local chieftains were kept in the shrine of Triloka-nātha in Lahaul until the beginning of this century. The names they were given may have changed with time and the growing complexity of local beliefs, as some of them, which to all appearances have a feminine aspect, nevertheless bear a masculine name;
  - their link with sacrificial victims is rather conjectural, although human sacrifices were common in Himachal Pradesh until the last century.

In fact, it would be appropriate to place these *mohras* in the ancient historical and cultural context of Himachal Pradesh with a view to interpretation of the very rich mythological material which local traditions provide. Two phases at least of the progressive penetration of the Aryan culture in the upper valleys of Himachal may be recognized in local mythology and toponomy:

- (a) a Hindu "evangelization" with a dominant Śaiva belief, which was attributed to mythical *ṛṣis* who vanquished a class of local genii such as *kinṇaras* and man-eaters of the Hārītī-Hiḍimbā type, going back, probably, to earlier protohistoric tribes locally feared for their ferocity as, for example, the Piśācas;
- (b) a more political penetration, mythically linked to the Mahābhārata war, with numerous references to the Pāṇḍavas, and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, although not necessarily contemporary with the historical events that acted as a background to these epics. A later penetration might, indeed, have been condensed and identified with these epics, but this political phase is definitely coloured by Vaiṣṇavism and royal institutions.

In such a context it is likely that local tribes worshipped severed heads of enemies or sacrificial victims (kings, heroes, children) and in certain cases linked this to a fertility cult, if not directly, at least by a merger with such related protohistoric cults. We observe that, actually, the totemic cult of skulls, although relegated to a secondary role, is still practised in the hills where skulls of animals (which were progressively substituted for human victims) are put above the lintels of entrances to temples or piled up near passes. Moreover, both Śaiva and Tantric Buddhist iconography is rich in wrathful deities bearing garlands of severed heads, and the pyramidal arrangement of *mohras* on *rathas* is evocative of the piles of heads of sacrificial victims. It may be further observed that the dome that tops the palanquins on which *mohras* are attached suggests the prototype of a funerary tumulus or *stūpa* much more than an umbrella.

The way the bust of Suhīdevī is placed in its shrine in Chamba town also suggests a link with a similar funeral structure, as it is put on a small

mound-like protuberance which emerges from a flattened hemispherical base (Fig. 172).

Figures such as Hārītī-Hiḍimbā, Chinnamastakā and their related *yoginīs*, whose cult seems to be of great antiquity in the hills, could be old assimilations into Hindu and Buddhist beliefs of ritual homicidal practices to which the skull cup (*kapāla*) and the garland of severed heads can also be traced.

The hypothesis—and its value is only hypothetical—according to which *mohras* could have been substituted for severed heads is attractive although only partially explanatory. It is quite in accordance with the more civilized and pacific tendencies of the Buddhist and Vaiṣṇava systems of substituting symbols for bloody practices.

There are two annual principal fairs in Himachal at which many *rathas* from the villages gather: the most important one is that of *Dussehra* in Sultanpur (Kullu), the other one being that of Śivarātri in Mandi. These two fairs appear to be exclusive: *rathas* attending *Dussehra* in Kullu would not attend Mandi's Śivarātri and vice versa. Both festivals last for ten days or so, but they involve such costs that many villages can no longer afford to attend them annually; hence the number of participating *rathas* has tended to decline since some years. There were only 46 *rathas* in 1982 for *Dussehra* in Kullu and 47 in 1983 for Śivarātri in Mandi which was estimated as being only one-third the attendance of some years ago. The two types of *rathas* are seen at both the fairs. However, most of those gathering in Kullu are of the larger variety, whereas in Mandi the smaller one prevails, with either three or seven *mohras* almost all of which are of embossed silver with a cast one placed on the lower front row. Modern cast *mohras* or embossed silver or copper *mohras* largely outnumber the few ancient ones, and the embossed *mohras* are by far more common than the cast ones, many of them being inscribed in the Tākri or Nāgarī script, sometimes providing a date.

We recorded dates ranging between 1501 or 1511 and 1982 A.D.

As already stated, the Kullu *Dussehra* is by far more impressive than the Mandi Śivarātri as the *rathas* of Kullu are on the whole larger, and pro-





Fig. 290. Śiva (?). Brass, 28 cm. Eastern H.P. Eighth-tenth century. (Courtesy Mr. M. Postel.)

Fig. 286. Crowned Maheśvara. Bronze, 15 cm. Eastern H.P. (?). Sixth century. (Courtesy Mr. M. Postel.)



vided with more *mohras* which are of better workmanship. They also display a more lavish decoration and attendance as the *pujaris* and *kardars* who accompany them are joined by their own bands of drummers and trumpeters. In Mandi, however, one feels that the genuine religious background is dimming, and the event definitely lacks the pomp it still has in Kullu.

The inference of such gatherings strikes mainly a political note, each village deity coming to pay feudal homage to the principal deity of the State who thus acts as their paramount lord, a ceremony

which clearly recalls and reflects the ancient feudal links established between lands and villages granted in vassalage by the king to his barons. Besides this formal act of obedience, the *rathas* are accustomed to visit each other merrily, meeting with dance and music while the bearers make them embrace mutually.

Apart from these two main festivals, a large number of local ones take place on a smaller scale, such as the one of the Nishu fair at Nirmand (8th Vaiśākha Sudi) where cast *mohras* of the four Chambus of nearby villages are present.

## EARLIEST AND CLASSICAL EVIDENCE (Sixth to Twelfth Century)

**T**ERRACOTTA MASKS of various sizes, provided with lateral holes for them to be fixed on a wall or a movable support, have been excavated in settlements of the Indus Valley Culture (Harappa, Mohenjo-daro) and the Northern Black Polished Ware. The tradition seems thus to have pre-existed long before the coming of the Indo-Aryans and might well have merged with the imported Aryan culture. Furthermore, their worship extends far beyond Himachal Pradesh, as *mohras* are still found in Nepal, Rajasthan and even in Maharashtra (Kolhapur).

Except for a few embossed silver specimens which might date to the eleventh-twelfth century, all the earliest *mohras* are cast mostly in brass, very few in bronze.

Perhaps the earliest known at present is a bronze *mohra*, 15 cm. high, of a three-eyed god, possibly Śiva, wearing the Sassanian diadem with a large frontal medallion that was a typical feature of post-Kuṣāṇa (230-330) and Gupta (320-470) art in North India (Fig. 286). As far as we know, it is the only one existent cast in bronze, with a deep, translucent, brownish patina. The face is smoothly modelled in quite a naturalistic way with heavy cheeks, a thick, protruding underlip, a well-defined chin, almond-shaped eyes with upper eyelids projecting from under the soft, rounded eyebrows. Light en-

gravings delineate the lips, moustache and eyes. Earrings consist of thick beads; the necklace is also made of heavy beads with a cylindrical pattern in the centre.

As already stated, the diadem is still strongly related to Irano-Sassanian prototypes which were subsequently adapted into the typical Gupta and post-Gupta design of crowns with three elements. This diadem does not fit the regular iconography of Śiva, who is classically depicted with a matted bun, without a crown, but may in a few instances, wear a crown or diadem. The masculinity is strongly characterized by emphasized secondary sexual characteristics such as the modelling and the thin moustache whereas in later production, as we shall see, a sexual ambiguity prevails so that often one can hardly decide whether one is confronted with a male or female deity as is, indeed, the case with the Berlin "Devī" (Fig. 297) which is in fact a figure of Śiva. The facial type almost tallies with that of the sculptures of the later Imperial Gupta age in Mathura and Sarnath (late fifth century).

A similar facial structure is found in a stone sculpture of a standing Kārttikeya in front of the entrance to the Śaktidevī temple in Chhatradi, which also shares both late Kuṣāṇa and Imperial Gupta stylistic traits (Fig. 96), and might be assigned to the fifth century. A date as early as the



Fig. 287. Doorway. Lakhamandal, U.P. Himalayas. Late Gupta. Fifth-sixth century. (Courtesy AIIS.)

Fig. 288. Dvārapāla. Lakhamandal, U.P. Himalayas. Late seventh or early eighth century. (Courtesy AIIS).



sixth century could thus fairly well be acknowledged for this *mohra* and, if we also admit a stylistic relation to the Mathura school, we could even assume the early fifth century as a possible date. Its provenance, however, cannot even be guessed; we cannot rely on information according to which this *mohra* came from the Chamba valley, because this early *mohra* can also be related to two stone sculptures from Lakhamandal (U.P. Himalayas; above Dehra Dun):

- a doorway in the folkish style of a miniature shrine that is still close to the Gupta tradition and which can be dated to the fifth or sixth century (Fig. 287). The facial structure, especially that of the central figure on the lintel, is strikingly close to this *mohra*: the same flattened nose, the same design of mouth and thick lips, the same pointed chin and small earrings made of thick beads;
- a *dvārapāla* in *ronde bosse* wearing the same collar and diadem provided with a similar studded base. This sculpture may be dated to the seventh or early eighth century (Fig. 288);
- in Nirmand, there is a Govardhanadhara (Fig. 76) which is obviously linked with the fifth century western Gupta style of Nachna Kuthara and displays a similar facial pattern.

To conclude provisionally, we are tempted to date this *mohra* to the sixth century and to admit the north-western part of U.P. or the eastern part of Himachal Pradesh as its provenance.

Another brass *mohra*, 27 cm. in height, has been published by Kramrisch, *Manifestations of Śiva*, No. 84, and assigned to ca eighth century, probably from Kashmir. The third eye allows one to identify it as Śiva, although the high diadem hides the bun. At first sight, it is strikingly suggestive of the style of the Turki Shahi period (sixth to ninth century) in Punjab and the Kabul valley, of which a few marble heads are known to exist and are representative of the switch from late Gandharan art to early central and northern Kashmiri art with a strong Irano-Sassanian influence. Indeed, the head displays a virile and martial mood enhanced by a heavy moustache and a wilful chin that looks definitely more Iranian than Indian. The eyes were once inlaid with electrum. Although an eighth-ninth century date is admissible, we can still only



guess that its provenance is between Swat and the Sutelj.

Of a more folkish style, but still within the same stylistic trend as these earliest *mohras*, is the Śiva of the Philadelphia Museum of Art published by Kramrisch, *Manifestations of Śiva*, No. 83 and by von Schroeder, *ITB* No. 25C (Fig. 289). Kramrisch dates it to the sixth to eighth century (?) and guesses it to be from Chamba, while von Schroeder attributes it to between 450 and 550 A.D. and assigns it allegedly to Chamba. We are rather inclined to interpret this *mohra* as a further development of the preceding ones as it obviously shares the same type of necklace and earrings and also has a related facial anatomy. Yet, it displays an evolution, with the increasing importance given to the torso and upper arms where nipples and armlets are now added. The volume of the arms is even suggested by a slight overmodelling which, as we shall see, will develop even further into distinct armpits.

Fig. 289. Śiva. Brass, 28 cm. Middle Sutelj. Ninth century. Philadelphia Museum of Art. (Gift of the Friends of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.)



The upper ends of the beaded necklace, common to all specimens of this stylistically well-defined group, even show an attempt towards an interpretative completion into a triple foliated motif (*datura* flowers?). Lateral locks of hair almost reach down to the shoulders so as to form the background which became so typical of the later classical *mohras*. The mouth with an emphasized winged design is reminiscent of the stereotyped smile of related Kashmiri bronzes of the late Utpala period as are also the eyes with the pupils half covered by the upper eyelids, the way the locks of hair adorn the forehead, the lateral fall of the locks of hair, the heavy chasing of anatomical details. Let us note the way the tragus of both ears is designed as a small bud or pearl, as we shall revert to this point.

All these factors would rather indicate a date much later than that suggested by von Schroeder; these points bear comparison with related northern Kashmiri bronzes dating to the ninth or tenth century such as those published in Pal's *BK*, Nos. 31, 97, 56, 51 and the wood carvings of the Markulādevī temple in Udaipur (Lahaul). This *mohra* might admittedly be related to the Chamba valley in so far as the above-mentioned shrine of Udaipur displays a strong influence of the Utpala style of Kashmir, but it is more likely that its provenance can be attributed to eastern Himachal Pradesh or to the Lakhamandal area in north-western U.P. A ninth or even eighth century date is admissible, as we shall see further on.

Still more folkish, but apparently of the same early stylistic brand, is a brass *mohra* (Fig. 290) with beaded necklace and earrings, the date of which can only be guessed to be early, say between the eighth and the tenth century, as it does not yet display the later development of the torso.

As observed from sources in which some of these *mohras* were published, it is generally believed that they originated either in Kashmir or Chamba, although no evidence of this has ever been produced.

However, the anatomical facial treatment of Fig. 286, parallel to the stone sculptures of Lakhamandal, already discussed, seems indeed to substantiate the opinion that these early *mohras* might



Fig. 291. Śiva. Brass, ca 35 to 40 cm. Middle Sutelj. Seventh-eighth century. Mahādeva temple, Behena (Middle Sutelj).

well have originated in the north-western part of U.P. and the eastern part of Himachal Pradesh.

Fig. 291 displays a rather huge brass *mohra* kept in the Mahādeva temple in Behena, Middle Sutelj. Although the photograph is not too clear, as we were not allowed to enter the sanctum, the *mohra* looks very ancient and shows an unusual classical or late post-Gupta well-modelled face of a young, fat and smiling boy, strikingly reminiscent, but for the bun, of the stone Śiva-vāmana of Mansar near Nagpur (New Delhi, National Museum, No. L7712).

A close examination of the ears reveals the same way of designing the tragus like a small pearl as observed in the Philadelphia *mohra* (Fig. 289) and as will be seen in Fig. 292. Arguing on such a minute detail may seem pusillanimous; however, it results from the highly conventional formalism that

constitutes a pattern common to many *mohras* of the same stylistic breed, and we will later on once more have to deal with such a small pointer. On now comparing the facial features of the *mohras* in Figs. 289, 291 and 292, we observe striking similarities in the way the mouth and lips, the nose, eyes, eyebrows and ears are modelled. All eyes are similarly almond-shaped with slightly pointed extremities, and the protruding eye-balls are circled by a faint fleshy roll. In No. 289, the nipples are in a too high an anatomical position but armpits are only very slightly suggested. In No. 292, the nipples are lower and the armpits are now fully modelled.

A proper dating of these *mohras* is not an easy task as we had to exclude four doubtful or even faked specimens which, as they were close to the London *mohra* No. 292, would have induced us to attribute a much later dating on grounds of the logical integration of morphological anachronisms into the establishment of a deductive chronological process.

The London *mohra* provides us with some chronological indications: the crown is typical of the late Kārkoṭa period in Kashmir (eighth-ninth century) and the temporal cockade and loops of the *kustis* are more inherent to Central Asia, Afghanistan, Gilgit, and appear in Himachal Pradesh to be quite common from the late eighth century onwards. The way the mouth and eyes are designed is also typical of bronzes of Central Asia, Gilgit, Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir where the late tenth century Sugatidarśana Lokeśvara (Pal, *BK*, No. 51) displays the same design in an already dry and academic mannerism. This, again, brings us back to the ninth-tenth century for the London *mohra*.

Both the Philadelphia and the London *mohras* are closely related morphologically and, although the Philadelphia one has a strong folkish look, we admit its anteriority to the London one on grounds of what we guess to be, in the latter, morphological developments of some patterns of the former such as the plain background and the more sophisticated design of the necklace and pendant. This should, however, not exclude their plausible contemporaneity. Hence, we propose to date the Philadelphia mask to the ninth century.



Fig. 292. Śiva. Brass, eyes inlaid with electrum, 34.5 cm. Middle Sutlej. Ninth-tenth century. The face becomes more elongated; the chin, however, is still pointed and small in proportion. Locks of hair are suggested by a lateral plain background fringed with a saw-teeth pattern, in which

holes have been pierced to fix the mohra on to a support. The necklace of No. 289 has evolved into a double row of pearls with a central pendant formed of a central pearl and a small foliated motif between a V-shaped volute pattern. (Private collection, London.)

If we still admit a stylistic link with the Śiva-vāmana *mohra* of Behena, then the latter could be of a fairly earlier date, say the seventh-eighth century.

The London *mohra* having many morphological

links with many later classical *mohras* of the Middle Sutlej, we can quite safely surmise that this early group originated in the Middle Sutlej; and we will now switch over to a survey of the later classical period in the Middle Sutlej valley.





## THE LATER CLASSICAL GROUPS

### (Twelfth to Thirteenth Century)

#### 1. THE LATER CLASSICAL EASTERN GROUP

(Twelfth to thirteenth century)

**M**ANY BRASS *MOHRAS* cast in the classical style are still worshipped in shrines in the Upper Sutlej valley such as Mahun, Behena, Bail, Tikri and Sarahan and, according to a census recently published by Mian Goverdhan Singh in *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, they seem to be quite numerous in the Kinnaur region, since at least eighteen shrines are said to keep metal *mohras*. However, we know of two or three specimens of related style wrought from embossed and chased silver plate.

All of them share the following common features:

- (1) a three-eyed, oval-shaped face with a very small protruding and pointed chin. The third eye evolves from an almond to a lozenge shape;
- (2) an ogive-shaped background;
- (3) many are embellished with bulbous-headed snakes (Fig. 294);
- (4) crowns are of an obvious north-eastern



Fig. 294. The bulbous-headed snake.

- (5) Indian type with lily-shaped elements very common in late Pāla sculpture; the earrings are invariably of the circular studded type; although the expression is of quite a feminine softness, the sexual ambiguity is tempered by the presence of breasts for females and mere nipples for males. In the case of Śiva, a crescent tops either the bun or the right part of the crown;
- (6) almond-shaped, protruding eyeballs and high bulging foreheads. Ears are already strongly stylized and provided sometimes with a pearl-shaped or pointed tragus;
- (7) a slightly V-shaped smile with a median parting of the lips;
- (8) a small lotus-shaped *stūpī* or a crescent tops the bun of Śiva or Devī;
- (9) they all have an average dimension of between 30 and 25 cm.

If we include the three embossed silver *mohras* which are likely to be the most ancient in this group (refer to the section devoted to embossed *mohras*, pp. 221 to 234 and Fig. 356) we could say that curls at first fringe the forehead, while at a later stage they are confused and merge with the studded lower rim of the diadem. Eyes, formerly often inlaid with electrum, have at first well-delineated pupils which subsequently are no more indicated; they are downcast but tend increasingly to look



Fig. 293. Mohras of the early and later classical periods in the Mahādeva shrine, Behena, Middle Sutlej.

Fig. 295. Mohra of Lubhriwala Nāga. Brass, 25 cm. Middle Sutlej, eleventh century, Khekshu. This mohra is still linked to the London mohra No 292, as the modelling of chest, arm-pits and arms suggests. Note the extension of the plain ogive-shaped background above the bun, where a kirtimukha appears. The curls of hair, though much worn, are still distinct from the lower rim of the diadem which bears a strong Pāla influence. The ears are designed in a schematic way but are still anatomically coherent. Note the bulbous-headed snake on the chest and the pearl necklace with central pendant under the trivali or triple fleshy fold of the neck. These three patterns will evolve later on into fixed stereotyped combined patterns. Although a mohra of Śiva, the name was subsequently adapted to snake worship.



forward while the eyelids are indicated by a double, chiselled stroke.

We refer to the two embossed silver *mohras* described elsewhere (Figs. 355 and 356) as being the classical Pratihāra prototypes of this group, and dating, perhaps, to as early as the eleventh century or the early twelfth century as suggested by both palaeographic and stylistic evidence. The profuse ornamental designs made possible by the embossing and chiselling technique are of a skilful workmanship that can be linked to the wood carvings of the Dakṣeśvara temple in Nirmand. Note how the curls on the forehead are still quite distinct from the lower rim of the diadem (Figs. 356 and 357).

Among the cast *mohras*, some were locally made according to Pāla and probably also Nepalese prototypes and hence differ stylistically from the classical imported and subsequently locally cast bronzes. An early specimen has been published by Pal, *BK*, Pl. 86, which may date to the mid thirteenth century. The crown is typical of the Pāla style, while the curls on the forehead seem to undergo a further interpretative process, being in this case confused with South Indian and Orissan small fringes sloping down from the lower band of the diadem. The pupils of the eyes are inlaid with electrum.

The Berlin Staatliche Museum's "Devī" (Fig. 297), although a Śiva as shown by the crescent against his matted hair-bun, inaugurates the late classical phase as evidenced by slight deviations such as the curls merging with the rim in the same studded design, the schematization of the ears already noted, the temporal flowers which seem to have no further organic or coherent connection with the diadem. The expression, however, is still genuinely classical and the look is downcast. The necklace with pendant and the bulbous-headed snake are still in an early evolutive stage.

Another curious bronze *mohra* of Śiva (Fig. 298) is very close to the Berlin "Devī", although probably of a slightly earlier date, and is almost certainly cast by a local artist from a prototype which could have been Nepalese as suggested by the design of the elements of the diadem and the odd iconographic gesture recalling the Buddhist *dharmacakramudrā* of Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara in Bihar and Nepal. Such a gesture occurs very seldom in Śaiva iconography. Armlets are de-

picted in a very low position, thus excluding a date prior to the late eleventh century. Note the way the temporal flowers are totally disconnected here from the absent rim of the diadem. Bronze *mohras* are exceptional in this later period; only one other is known (see Fig. 301) but bronze again appears in the fifteenth century.

Two other *mohras* of Śiva (Figs. 301 and 305) and two of Devī (Figs. 303 and 304) characterize the transition between classical and folk art, an event that might have taken place in the late twelfth century and first half of the thirteenth century:

- they get smaller and narrower with time;
- the third eye is progressively transformed from a lozenge into a spearhead shape;
- the eyebrows turn outwards in a sharp aris, and have an upturned outer end, a feature which became a distinctive criterion of the later folkish eastern group and is, as we have seen in the chapters dealing with icons, specific to the Middle Sutlej;
- the eyes, with double-stroked lids, become

Fig. 296. *Mohra of the Bail ratha*. Brass, ca 30 cm. Middle Sutlej, eleventh century or earlier. A curious bust, the ears of which are still tightly pressed against the temples as in the early classical phase.



Fig. 297. *The Berlin "Devī"*. Brass, 34 cm. Middle Sutlej, early twelfth century. [Museum für Indische Kunst, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin (West).]









Fig. 298. *Bust of Śiva*. Bronze, 36 cm. Middle Sutlej, late eleventh or early twelfth century. (Courtesy Mr. M. Postel.)



Fig. 302. *Devatā Bhadarlu*. Brass, ca 20 cm. Middle Sutlej, late twelfth century. Eyebrows and eyelids are rechased. The rim of the lower part of the background turns inwards at shoulder height into a small volute, thus suggesting the bend of the shoulder. We can, indeed, still see the armlets in this specimen. Most probably this mohra was cast after a much older model, as the high position of the armlets points to a much earlier date than the one we attribute on the basis that the curls of hair have completely merged with the diadem and are clearly separated from the forehead by a narrow moulding.

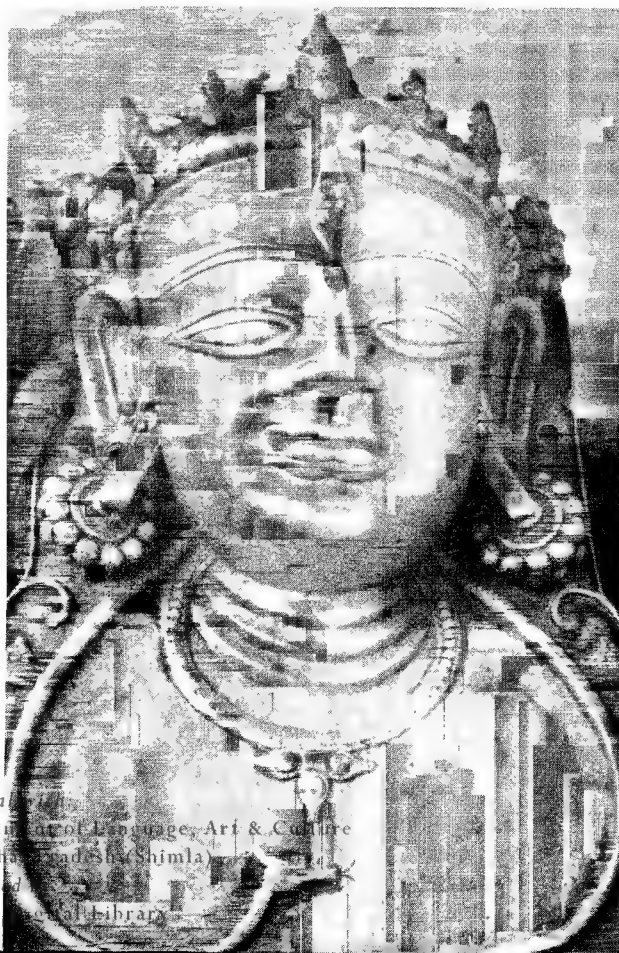


Fig. 299. *The mohra at the top of the Bail ratha*. Middle Sutlej, twelfth century. This mohra is said to have been found in a field, hence the hole in the forehead caused by a spade.

Fig. 300. *Two mohras in the Mahādeva shrine, Behena*. Brass, ca 25 cm. Middle Sutlej, first half of the thirteenth century. The curls of hair now merge with the rim of the diadem. The snakes are still coiled so as to delineate the outer edge of the background of the lower half of the mohra.

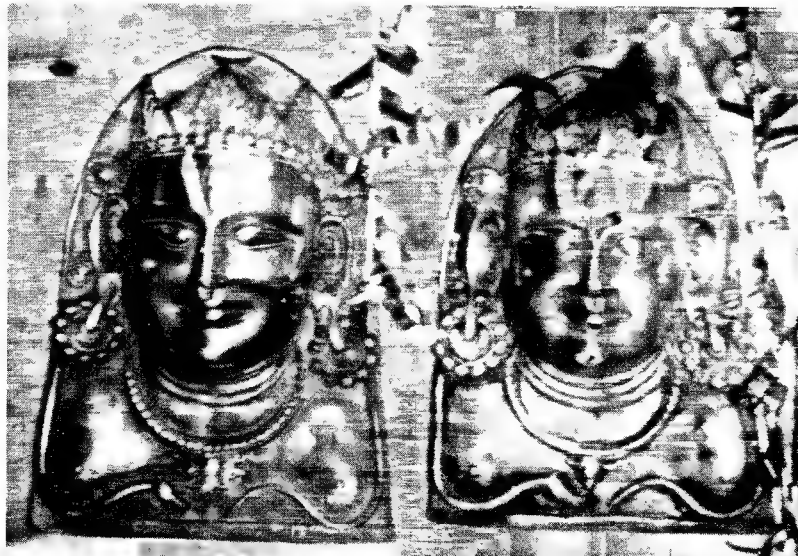




Fig. 306. The ratha of Śeṣanāga at Kullu's Dussehra fair in 1982.



Fig. 305. Śiva. Brass, ca 30 cm. Middle Sutlej, mid thirteenth century. This mohra from Tikri already displays the early folkish stage despite the still classical look. The main characteristics of this change are: the steadily evolving narrowness of the background and its scooped sideline sometimes causing the earrings to cross over the rim; the drier and more schematic way of treating the facial anatomy and the strong geometrization of the ears; a progressive technical application of the dhun or wax thread (here in the crown and ears).

stereotypically elongated and the smile likewise assumes its folkish V shape which was later so typical of the cast *mohras*, with a heavily protruding underlip and emphasized cheek-bones. Both lips may also be emphasized by an outer engraved line;

- the upper ogive outline is, in some cases, studded, but it has generally a simple moulded border, while the lower half, also bordered, terminates in an inward swirl with a small flower bud at its end and is distinct from the bulbous snake heads; the original function of this design is to delineate the bend of the shoulders (see Fig. 302);
- the curls definitely merge with the rim of the diadem;
- the necklace ends in the centre with a drop-shaped pendant;

— the Devī has, besides the necklace, a pearl collar and, curiously, the triple fleshy fold of the neck (*trivali*), seems to be interpreted as a kind of jewelled collar.

A group of fifteen *mohras* and one bust of Śiva, all stylistically related to this late classical group, is still under worship in the Behena shrine. Among these, there is a triple *mohra* like the one that once belonged to the Paraśurāma temple in Nirmand (published in Goverdhan Singh's *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, Pl. XC VII b), and a double one with the two faces juxtaposed (Fig. 293).

So much for the early and later classical cast *mohras* all of which we can relate geographically to the Middle Sutlej.





Fig. 307. Mohra of Devatā Nārāyaṇa, Gadhi Suraj at the Śivarātri of Mandi, 1983. Brass, ca 35 cm. Cis-Sutlej or Beas, twelfth century (?). Most of the facial features such as ears (although put a bit too high), curls of hair between forehead and the studded rim of the diadem, and the modelling still look classical. The cockades, however, are completely non-functional. The earrings are similar to those of Figs. 303 and 304. The crown derives from the Kashmiri model.



Fig. 308. Śiva. Brass. Middle Sutlej or Beas, mid thirteenth century. Ratha of Śeṣanāga at Kullu's Dussehra. Strongly modelled face of the Middle Sutlej mid thirteenth century style.

## 2. THE LATER CLASSICAL CENTRAL GROUP AND VARIOUS OTHER STYLES (Thirteenth century)

A few *mohras* have been noticed in Kullu and Mandi that were at first believed to be quite recent because of their brightness and academic distinction from the others which were of an obviously folkish style. Their faces are much worn, a fact which seems to bear out their antiquity. But the few we encountered display such deviations from the classical prototypes that we could hardly date them prior to the middle of the thirteenth century. As we shall see, their link with later production from the late thirteenth to the fifteenth century is obvious, and thus we have to deal with a continuous evolution in the case of the central group. The look is more masculine and martial (one even

has a moustache) while some crowns, with their medallions, are more western (Fig. 307). The outline of the background seems to be vaulted rather than ogive-shaped. The flower buds are, in some cases, completely disconnected both from the ears and the rim of the diadem. Foreheads are very high and bulging and crowns, with five elements instead of three, appear, which is yet an interpretative deviation from the western and the Gupta prototypes.

In another stylistic group, the *mohras* have slightly curved eyebrows with no upturned ends and the face is disproportionately elongated. The mouth is, at first, treated on a more horizontal plane, later assuming the typical V-shaped smile occurring in the eastern group. The third eye retains a rounded, more or less, elongated shape



Fig. 309. Śiva. Brass, ca 25 cm. Middle Sutlej or Beas, late thirteenth century. Teel ratha at Kullu's Dussehra. Another mohra of the Middle Sutlej style.

(Figs. 312 to 315). As they were all fixed on *rathas* we could not see beyond their striking, elongated faces.

Another brass *mohra* (Fig. 316) could possibly be linked with the Devatā Nārāyaṇa of Gadh Suraj (Fig. 307), although it appeared to be quite modern.

We must confess that our first encounter with the *mohras* gathered at the *Dussehra* festival of Kullu in 1982 made us believe that almost all of them were quite recent as all had the same bright look. Indeed, while most were modern, our inexperience led us to neglect some others which could have been ancient. All were continuously rubbed and polished and only an experienced



Fig. 311. Śiva. Brass, ca 20 cm. Middle Sutlej or Beas, late thirteenth century, Katroni ratha. Chin and cheekbones become overemphasized.

eye — which we acquired too late — could have distinguished the ancient from the recent ones. It is only after a long comparative and analytical process that we came to the conclusion that *mohras* such as this one (Fig. 316) could well be ancient. Except for the crown, the moustache and the *ūrṇā* or *tilaka* under the third eye, it could well belong to an early series linked with the *mohra* in Fig. 307, possibly of the twelfth century, the cockades in the background of which present a similar and not often encountered pattern. We might add in our defence that the people accompanying the *rathas* and their *kardars* often proved very suspicious — we were even referred to the police as some people suspected us of being thieves — so that we were unable to proceed with proper investigations. We had to rely only on what we saw and often were permitted to photograph in very bad conditions.

From the Bail *ratha* we must isolate a particular *mohra* (Fig. 317) which we date stylistically to the second half of the thirteenth century and which is typical also of the latest evolution of the classical



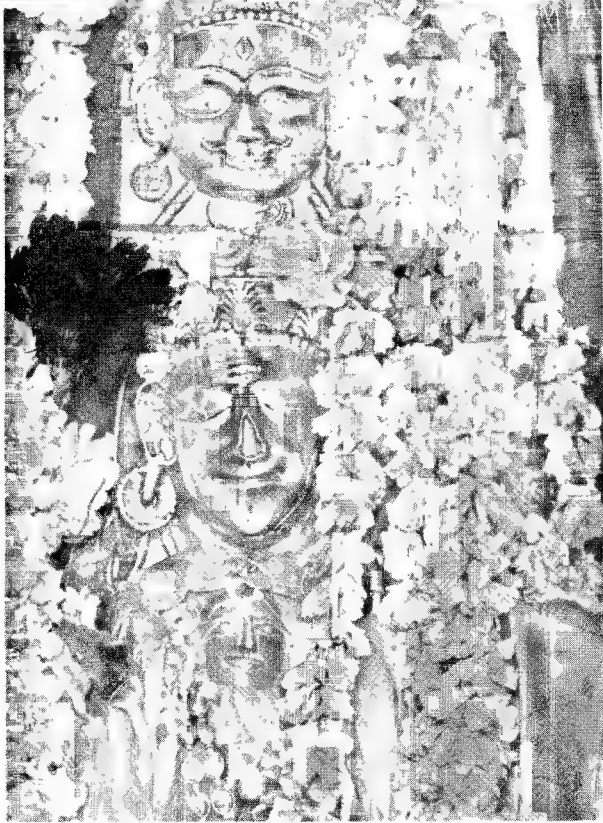


Fig. 312. Mohra on the Jvani Mahādeva ratha from Neoli at Kullu's Dussehra. Brass. Mid thirteenth century. Ears already show a drastic schematization, the crown still has three elements, and the position of the cockade matches that of the crown.

*mohras* of the Middle Sutlej, ending in a scooped rim of the background which became so characteristic of the later folkish production. The crown is still of the Pāla variety with three elements, the forehead is higher than in the previous group of *mohras* (Figs. 297 to 305) and the curls are now incoherently displaced above the rim of the diadem.

The very conventional cashew-nut type of ear is provided with a small, spherical tragus and three, instead of one, parted locks of hair appear above the ear, the two upper ones forming a pattern that could be a new semiotic integration of the classical temporal knot of the *kusti*. Staring eyes and eyebrows are particularly dry and chiselled after casting. The *trivali* consists of a triple studded collar and the long necklace is rendered in a quite conventional way, there being no breasts to justify the way its lower portion narrows. The mouth will, however, retain our special attention as its design, already outlined in Fig. 301, is typical of the embossed silver *mohras* which were produced in



Fig. 310. Śiva. Brass. ca 25 cm. Middle Sutlej or Beas, late thirteenth century. Katroni ratha. Note the small lock of hair above the ears, already observed in Figs. 303 and 304, and the triangular tragus. The lower lobes of the ears now extend obliquely in quite an unnatural way. Eyes are of a fish-shaped, rather elongated type, and the typical V-shaped smile becomes stereotyped. The quality of the casting also becomes progressively inferior.

the Middle Sutlej in the twelfth and later centuries.

We date one *mohra* of Khekshu (Fig. 318) to about 1300 or even to the early fourteenth century, at the fringe of the late classical and early folk phase, which in every respect can be stylistically compared with the triple *mohra* of Mahādeva (Fig. 293, left): the same facial treatment and expression, the same design of the mouth, the same double knotted chin, necklace and snake, row of mango-like patterns above the rim of the diadem, the same triangular pendant of the necklace that appears in all the later *mohras* of this stylistic group.





Fig. 303. Front and side views of Devī. Brass, 23 cm. Middle

Sulej, early thirteenth century. The breasts are definitely feminine and hence in this case we are sure we have a mohra of Devī. Changes towards the early folk style appeared in the early thirteenth century: a trend towards a drier, stereotyped reproduction of earlier models and, already, towards an interpretative process like the trivali being metamorphosed into a ringed collar. The ears are schematized into a cashew-nut shape and the tragus, once almost completely obsolete, once again starts to evolve from a small patch into a more obvious pattern as seen in Fig. 305. The volute of the lower rim is interpreted as a bulbous-headed snake. The upper rim is studded, a morphologic adaptation, perhaps, of the much earlier classical type (Fig. 292). The necklace evolves from the earlier circular single row of pearls into a composite two-rowed necklace, the lower portion of which falls between the breasts. A small lock of hair appears above the ears. (Private collection.)

Fig. 304. Devī. Brass, 22.5 cm. Middle Sulej, early thirteenth century. A variant of the previous mohra. Note the spear-head-like third eye in both cases. (Private collection.)

Fig. 301. Śiva. Bronze, ca 22 cm. Middle Sulej, late twelfth century. The eyebrows turn in a lateral upward bend. The coiled snake is now completely dissociated from the rim of the background, which is now treated as an independent ornamental moulding, the median inward volutes of which may have originated, as we will see in the next mohra (Fig. 302), in the bent slope of the shoulders. (Courtesy Mr. M. Postel.)



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Fig. 313. Mohra at Kullu's Dussehra. Brass, late thirteenth century.

Fig. 314. Mohra on the Śeṣanāga ratha at Kullu's Dussehra. Brass, ca 15 cm. Late thirteenth century. Eyes become fish-shaped, eyebrows are treated as a sinuous rim as in the later classical Middle Sutlej group, the forehead is higher, and the cockade has no further connection with the crown.



We might discuss here the *mohras* reproduced in the wood carvings of the door-jambs of the Parāśara temple in Mandi district, yet being in the geographic complex of the Beas (Fig. 319). King Ban Sen, who ordered this temple built died in 1346, and we can surmise that the earliest portions of the carvings (some were added later in different styles and workmanship) might be dated to about 1340.

A *mohra* that still has a classical look for such a relatively late date, unquestionably figures on that part of the left door-jamb, and the door-jamb itself has retained a very classical style and hence could also appear to be earlier than the mid fourteenth century.

A closer scrutiny, however, reveals that this *mohra* indeed might derive from the late classical brass ones of the Middle Sutlej (Behena, Bail, Tikri) because of the face, the necklace, the emphasized nipples and the snake. The mouth, however, already displays a stereotype which started at the end of the thirteenth century.

Fig. 315. Mohra on a ratha in Mandi's Śivarātri. Brass, ca 30 cm. (?). Late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Hypertrophy of the chin, bulbous forehead, fish-shaped eyes and projecting cheek-bones. The ears are put too high with a cockade unconnected with the crown.







Fig. 316. Mohra on the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa ratha at Kullu's Dussehra. Brass. Early thirteenth or sixteenth century.



Fig. 317. Śiva. Brass, ca 25 cm. Middle Sutlej, second half of the thirteenth century. Note the particular design of the mouth which is more inherent to embossed silver mohras of the Middle Sutlej in the twelfth and later centuries.

Fig. 318. Śiva. Brass, ca 20 cm. Middle Sutlej, ca 1300 or slightly later. Kheksbu.



Fig. 319. Mask appearing on the left door-jamb of the Parashar temple (Mandi). Beas. ca 1340.

Proper to the early fourteenth century are the staring, elongated eyes, the bulging forehead, the double knotted chin and the emphasized cheekbones. The ears do not match but well the hypertrophied triangular tragus. The crown also differs greatly in type, having five elements and four intermediate ones, thus deriving from the later evolution of the Pāla crowns. The rim is studded, which suggests, of course, the merging of the curls of hair with the crown. Untypical are the huge swallow-tailed *kustis* projecting laterally, showing an interpretative integration of either the temporal knots of the *kusti* or of the three locks of hair above the ear that were observed in Fig. 317.

We can draw some observations at this stage, when classical art seems to have come to a quite sudden end and was succeeded by a definitely folkish style.

A striking fact is that, if our chronological system is correct, brass icons underwent folkish alterations far earlier than it seems to have been the case with *mohras*. Indeed, we have seen the sudden shift from icons imported from U.P. until the end of the twelfth century towards a definite folkish style that became established as early perhaps as the middle of the thirteenth century. It is noteworthy that until now no close stylistic parallelism appears between icons and *mohras*, each having its own specific stylistic idiom.

On the other hand, the stylistic shift from classical *mohras* to a well established folkish style took much more time and was much more progressive (the wooden *mohra* of Parashar is a striking example of this conservative trend).

From these observations, we are tempted to infer hypothetical, and therefore provisional, conclusions:

- the cult of *mohras* being apparently much older than the cult of icons which had to be

imported in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, we can surmise that the casting of brass *mohras* was already established since long and was provided with its own iconographic and stylistic specific traditions;

- it seems also that the cult of icons was introduced at a later period (eleventh-twelfth century) and that until the fourteenth century at least it remained dissociated from the more traditional and conservative cult of *mohras*. Indeed, *mohras* and icons were but exceptionally associated (only two examples have been seen in Figs. 257 and 260) and even at present *mohras* and icons are seldom associated in shrines;
- *mohra* casters might plausibly have constituted a distinct caste provided with its own centuries-old tradition that was kept alive until the early fourteenth century, while icon casters started at first rather occasionally and then progressively at a more steady tempo, to become a distinct corporate entity with practically no tradition at all. Hence the striking stylistic and technical discrepancies between *mohras* and icons;
- striking also is the stylistic discrepancy between the late classical cast *mohras* of the eleventh-twelfth century and the earliest evidence of embossed silver *mohras* of the same period as it seems obvious, as will be seen, that the embossed silver *mohras* emanated from another different stylistic and probably imported tradition;
- it was only after a century, that means a span of time of four generations from 1200 onwards, that *mohra* casters and icon casters came to merge into the one and the same corporate body of metal casters, or if not to merge, at least to narrow down the gap between them.

## THE FOLKISH GROUPS (Fourteenth to Fifteenth Century)

### Fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

WE HAVE OBSERVED that up to the emergence of a folkish style of *mohras*, which, as might be expected, shares many common features with the parallel folkish style that was characteristic of brass icons, there was no such close parallel in the previous classical period during which, apparently, *mohras* emanated from a tradition different from that of the brass icons.

It is worthwhile briefly summarizing here the relevant circumstances and the context we have so far gathered about early *mohras*, and to infer therefrom some conclusions or points of argument:

An early eastern tradition starts with late Gupta influence as early as the sixth century, and evolves by assimilating elements of such western styles as the Turki-Shahi, Kashmiri (late Kārkoṭa and Lohara period) and northern Kashmir.

The earliest specimens of the *later* eastern tradition are not cast but embossed silver faces, obviously related to late Pratihāra and Katyūri stylistic features. They may be dated from the eleventh century. However, it is a striking fact that all the earliest known cast *mohras* of this area bear some evidence of Pāla influence from north-eastern India at least in the crowns, and, except for the arched or ogival outline of the background, they display but few links with the preceding tradition,

as if they were, in fact, a freshly imported religious and artistic feature.

We can suggest at least one partial explanation for the north-eastern Indian influence which extended far beyond the Sutlej and Beas valleys in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and was even concentrated in western and southern Tibet where so many Pāla brasses were imported to provide the many newly founded Buddhist monasteries with cultural icons.

Two politico-economic events of considerable importance played a role in shaping the future of cultural and economic exchanges between western and eastern North India in the early eleventh century —

- (1) On the western frontiers of Punjab, Kashmir and Central Asia, the Islamic threat and sporadic incursions progressed into permanent territorial conquest which resulted in a north-eastern shift of the Indo-Gangetic trade routes of which the Beas and the Middle Sutlej became for nearly two centuries the main links between India and that part of Central Asia still free from Islamic domination. The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the early thirteenth century, controlling practically the whole of the northern Indian plains, must have resulted



Fig. 320. The Chambu temple in Kasholigad, Middle Sutlej, where many early folk bronzes are kept.

in a drastic diminishing of trade and transit in the hills, leaving the people there both economically and culturally isolated for a long time and thus promoting the emergence of a post-classical folk art.

- (2) Equally serious was the withdrawal of the Pāla power and Buddhist trading communities from Indian settlements in South-East Asia caused by the Coḷas. In the late years of the tenth century, the Coḷas were indeed able to conclusively expel their northern rivals from their colonies (in Malaysia, Java and Sumatra), cutting them off from their main economic hinterland, even leading victorious armies to the border of the Ganges in 1020 A.D. Such a military blow should have been lethal to Pāla political and economical existence had they not im-

mediately sought fresh markets towards China through Burma (Nan Chao and Sukhotai) and in Central Asia through Western Tibet. Hence the shift of the Pāla trade outlets from North-East Asia to both Burma and Western Tibet with which the Beas and, above all, the Sutlej were the most convenient ways of communication. This could thus explain the sudden emergence of Pāla features in cast *mohras* of the Upper Sutlej and, as this trade, too, came to a sudden halt, due to the Islamic conquest of Bihar and Bengal in the last decade of the twelfth century, their progressive merger with folk art.

No frank stylistic division can as yet be defined in our approach to the folkish production of



*mohras* in the eastern part of Himachal Pradesh in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as so many former stylistic features, hitherto more or less geographically restricted to a well-confined area, suddenly began to disseminate and mingle with each other, producing a puzzle quite nightmarish to the archaeologist.

We interpret this as the result of the merger of the former hypothetical corporative dichotomy between *mohra* casters and icon casters into one and the same corporate entity.

The general trend was that the late classical style of *mohras* suddenly started to spread everywhere, producing works of variable size, technical skill and quality, in the process of gradually assimilating patterns that were more specific to the style of brass icons. *Mohras* of the fourteenth century have a face which becomes progressively narrower, with an increasingly pointed chin. Eyes become more and more elongated, fish-shaped and surrounded by a single or double rim.

At the end of the fourteenth century, and for the first half of the fifteenth century, a trend (we still do not know whether it was general or only local) emerged in favour of the heavy, round faces of the later classical period which were then adapted to the folkish taste. As for the icons, it seems that in the years around 1400 a possible economical boom gave impetus to the local workshops in terms of quality, creativity and size of the *mohras* — for a few years perhaps. Soon, indeed, a progressive degradation once again crept in, affecting both the quality and size of the *mohras* until production almost came to a halt in the late fifteenth century. The fifteenth century, more particularly the later half, was characterized by a return to the type of *mohras* with elongated faces, prognathism and the long fish-shaped eyes, while the round-faced variety metamorphosed into a facial type with typically emphasized cheek-bones, puffy cheeks and a rather heavy, unnaturally pointed chin. We observe also that in this later period smaller and even miniature masks started to be common. However, if our classification is correct, we must emphasize the fact that in the later part of the fifteenth century or the early sixteenth century an obvious archaic trend prevailed at least in a few instances at the very period when a drastic and complete stylistic change

was about to take place with the generalized practice of embossing *mohras* on a silver sheet and progressive—but never complete—abandonment of the practice of casting *mohras*.

Equally relevant is the fact that in the early phase, that is, up to the late fourteenth century, only one snake figures of which, as in the late classical prototypes, the bulbous head is seen in profile. From the late fourteenth century or the early fifteenth century onwards, two snakes become more common and their heads are no more seen in profile but as a top view, and their eyes are now clearly detailed. A triangular arc thus substitutes the typical bulbous head.

Bronze alloys also seem to have become more common in the fifteenth century. The fashion of wearing a moustache, a newly introduced feature that originated perhaps from Rajputs migrating into the Hills, appears with the last *mohras*, thus dating from the second half of the fifteenth century.

It seems premature at present to establish any stylistic division (so much are the various stylistic patterns intermingled) and hence we can only proceed by commenting in a chronological sequence on the *mohras* that are illustrated. We even doubt that any strict local classification could be attempted as there was such a considerable mix-up of various stylistic patterns. In this we see a possible clue giving some weight to the hypothesis according to which the former two distinct bodies of classical *mohra* casters and the earliest folkish icon casters merged into one and the same corporate entity that came to lead, most probably, a semi-nomadic existence, thus spreading and mixing up everywhere their once more or less localized and fixed stylistic patterns and features.

The only group we can isolate is that of the late small or even miniature *mohras* (Figs. 346 to 351) which we believe originated in the Beas and Cis-Sutlej, all of them sharing the same S- or inverted S-shaped spiralled ears, an extremely projecting beaked nose, and the same late date to the second half of the fifteenth century. Some of them have such a low forehead that there is no space for the third eye (the sole exception to the rule that we know of).



Fig. 328. Mohra. Bronze, 29.2 cm. Cis-Sutlej (?). About 1400.

The appearance of this exceptional mohra in style, technical skill, finish and alloy, might be related to the late classical mohras of Fig. 318 by its physiognomy, as also to the few icons of the florid Cis-Sutlej style. This type of mohra must have indeed been impressive, as a part of the fifteenth century production has retained the same kind of broad, smiling face. The caster proved to be clever, as he was able to correctly interpret features of much earlier mohras of the classical period of the Fig. 292 type, not only in the medallions of the crown, which he has mixed with the triangular elements of the Pāla crown, but also in placing the arms on the sides, and even in providing them with studded armlets. However, the trivali, as

in Fig. 324, has not been correctly rendered. The head of the snake is adorned with a swirling pattern, and the base is provided with a moulded plinth ending in knobs, surmounted by a curious squarish pattern which, as we shall see in the next mohra, has not been, it seems, understood. Note the lozenge-shaped pendant adorned with three circular patterns. Cockades are dropped out, but the complicated design of the inner part of the ears with the tragus projecting as a small patch in the middle must have puzzled the artist. Note that he has correctly integrated the lobes. The florid ornamentation of the crown is reminiscent of what we have encountered in the impressive icons of the same period. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. P. Pal.)



Fig. 321. Two mohras. Brass, approx. 22 cm. each. Middle Sutelj. Fourteenth century. Chambu temple. The right mohra is the earliest and might date to the early fourteenth century. The folkish style tends to schematize the eyes and ears in various unnatural ways. Note, in the foliated elements of the crown, the spherical pattern surmounted by a vertical stem which later evolves into a flask-like pattern characteristic of the final phase in the fifteenth century. Moustaches are perhaps a later engraved addition, as are the pupils of the eyes. Eyes are invariably surrounded by a rim, and the third

eye here has a lozenge shape. Note the holes provided in the waisted background to fix the mohra on a support, and also the two atrophied inner swirls in the lower part that become non-functional and purely ornamental, as they are no longer related to the bend of the shoulders. A small rosette appears at the top of the ogive. Cockades are still present, but above the studded rim of the crown. The facial modelling still maintains a classical smoothness but already shows a drier mannerism. The left mohra might be dated to the second half of the fourteenth century. The crown already undergoes a further deviation, and shows the beginning of its design in later mohras and folkish icons. The modelling is stiff, the mouth stereotyped, the fish-shaped horizontal eyes are abnormally elongated, and the eyebrows are treated in deep relief in the way of a gutter.



Fig. 322. Mohra. Brass, approx. 20 cm. Middle Sutelj. Late fourteenth century or possibly even fifteenth century. Chambu temple, Kasholigad. Stylistically linked to Fig. 321 (left), this mohra is fitted on a later base on which three small figures appear, and the wall against which the mohra stands is provided with a prabhāvali. As a rule, mohras are never provided with their own stand or base. They can, however, exceptionally have small legs as in Fig. 345. Another rule is that they always have a third eye, except for some late miniature masks of the Beas. The nose becomes more projecting and beaked, and the eyebrows are now treated as a continuous horizontal moulding across the forehead, a curious pattern that became common in some later mohras (see Figs. 329, 331). The mouth has the V-shaped smile, chin and cheek-bones become over-emphasized. Note the hypertrophied tragus and the overhead view of the two snakes with heads, a pattern that possibly dates this mohra to a later stage of the fifteenth century. (Please refer to the commentary on Fig. 337.)



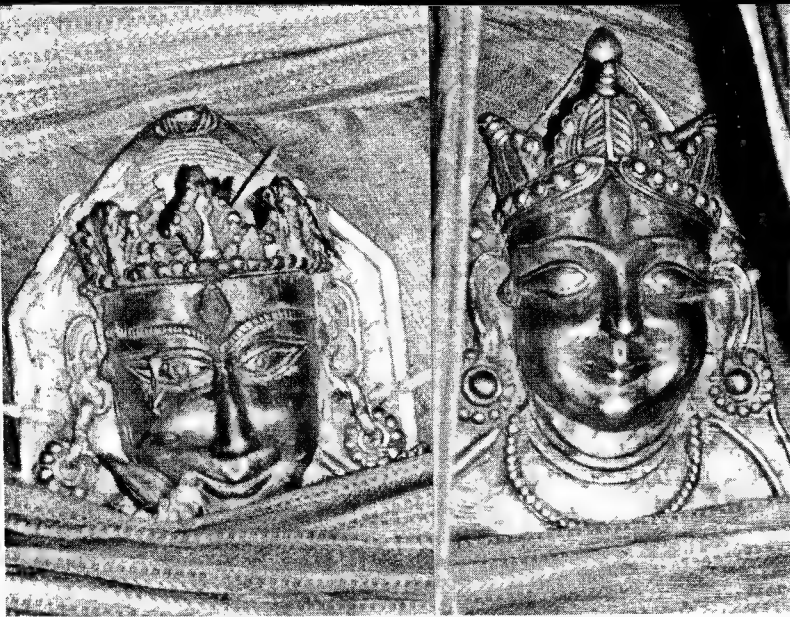


Fig. 323. Two mohras. Brass, ca 25 cm. Beas (?). Second quarter of the fourteenth century. From a ratha at Mandi Śivarātri. The face of the right specimen can be compared with the Parashar wood carving (Fig. 319): ears are schematized in quite a similar way, which perhaps marks the start of the double-spiralled, inverted-S ears, later typical of the mohras and icons of the Beas. Note also the same triangular, hypertrophied tragus as in Parashar. The crown deviates from the classical imported Pāla type. The left specimen has a crown similar to that of Fig. 321 (right), and the upper section of the background has concentric stripes.

Fig. 325. Mohra. Brass, 28 cm. Middle Sutlej (?). Second half or late fourteenth century. Crown with five elements and plain earrings. (Private collection.)

Fig. 324. Mohra. Brass, 22 cm. Beas (?). Second half or late fourteenth century. A more elongated face, with hypertrophied cheek-bones and eyes possessing that typical look of the later mohras with emphasis on verticality. The design of the earrings evolves from that in Fig. 321 (left) to finally become that in Fig. 340. The upper section of the background is engraved with concentric stripes suggesting an extension of the hair-bun. Note the nipples placed on either side of the snake. (Simla Museum.)







Fig. 326. Mohra. Brass, 22 cm. Middle Sutlej. About 1400. Chambu temple, Kasholigad. The whole background is horizontally striped and the scales of the snake are suggested by a rough chasing process. Eyebrows are typical of the Middle Sutlej folkish style with a deep, plunging median curve. The elements of the crown are seen as a further stage in the evolution towards the final flask-like pattern.



Fig. 329. Mohra. Brass, 28 cm. Cis-Sutlej (?). First quarter of the fifteenth century. A more folkish interpretation of mohra No. 328: the crown, the facial expression and the ears are obviously related. The necklace is of the same type as in the bust-like mohra No. 296, and the horizontal, gutter-like eyebrows are strongly reminiscent of mohra No. 322. There are two snakes. The lower rims of the background are studded and end in a loop, provided, most probably, to fix the mohra on a support, but this could only work if another loop is provided in a much higher position. We believe it to be a detail either copied or interpreted after an earlier prototype or, possibly also, after the Los Angeles mohra (Fig. 328) with which this specimen shares so many common features. To the nipples are added two star-like motifs which are totally uncommon, as is also the very complex design of the inner part of the ears with a spiralled tragus. The casting is of poor quality and four holes remain in the metal which is exceptionally thin. (Private collection.)

Fig. 327. Mohra. Brass, ca 25 cm. Beas. About 1400. Bajaura (Kullu). This mohra could be taken for a modern one, so brightly does it shine. It has, however, all the stylistic appearances of the late fourteenth century production. Note the atrophied cockades, totally disconnected from the crown, placed above cashew-nut type ears. Eyes are now provided with a double rim. Earrings are of the plain type, but the way they are connected to the ears by means of an "artificial" lobe proves that such heavy earrings were out of fashion since long. It seems that at this stage, which we date to about 1400, mohras are on an average distinctly bigger in dimensions, between 25 and 30 cm. and, above all, show a particular technical skill and finish, a fact we believe to be related to a temporary local economic boom.



Fig. 330. Mohra. Brass, 18 cm. Middle Sutlej. First half of the fifteenth century. Tikri. After a later classical model the trivali of which was already interpreted as a collar (Figs. 303 and 304).



Fig. 332. Mohra of Devī (?). Beas or Cis-Sutlej. First half of the fifteenth century. From P. Jayakar's Earthen Drum, Fig. 174. As the presence of a child being suckled is most unusual, we deem it appropriate to include this mohra, which has already been published. We refer to the earlier mohra No. 327 for the striped background, the spiralled discus and the design of the ears (here, indeed, the upper swirl of the ear is an interpretation of the atrophied cockades observed in mohra No. 327).



Fig. 331. Front and lateral view of a mohra. Brass, approx. 20 cm. Cis-Sutlej. First half of the fifteenth century. The same facial expression as the three preceding mohras and the striking prominent, horizontal, continuous gutter of the eyebrows. The crown and eyes are related to mohra No. 321 (left) and can be compared with the brass Viṣṇu, No. 256. The ears are reminiscent of those of the wooden mohra of Parashar, and are of a design already encountered in icons attributed to the Cis-Sutlej. The profile shows a straight nose and slight prognathism. (Private collection.)



Fig. 333. Mohra. Brass, 27 cm. Beas (?). Early fifteenth century. Another very uncommon mohra treated as a waisted bust, with no background. The crown with three high elements, and the round face, seem to be more typical of the Kullu valley. The face is much worn, but there are traces of the eyes, and a third eye on the high, bulging forehead. As is often the case with Kullu's later production, and even in mohra No. 327 where they are hardly noticeable, the eyebrows are so delicately moulded, as in the early classical phase, that they are completely worn off. The torso seems to be an adaptation of the big bust-like mohras with shoulders and arms. Slight engravings of a repeated wave-like motif appear on the trivali which, as a small pendant suggests, has been interpreted as a collar. The patched breasts, rather emphasized, appear inside the necklace, above its lower trailing section, in the middle of which is the pendant. The two snakes joined by a reef knot with heads turned upwards, suggest a sexual symbolism (snakes indeed often twine in an apparently knotted position when in coitus) and this is suggestive also of the relationship between some mohras, snake worship and fertility cults, of which the preceding mohra No. 332 is representative. (Courtesy Mr. M. Postel.)

Fig. 334B. Mohra. Brass, 15 cm. Middle Sutlej. Mid fifteenth century. Khekshu. Typical puffed face with emphasized cheeks and pointed chin. The whole surface is striped. Note the continuous gutter-like projecting rim of the eyebrows.



Fig. 334A. Mohra. Brass, approx. 25 cm. Middle Sutlej. Mid fifteenth century. Although close to the latest classical models, the horizontal stripes covering now the whole surface and the rather rough workmanship make us inclined to date this mask to fifteenth century production, even to its second half. Note the thin, horizontal tragus. (Crafts Museum, New Delhi.)







Fig. 335. Mohra. Brass, 15 cm. Middle Sutlej. Mid fifteenth century. Kheksbu. Trivali treated as a collar. Note the small pearl topping the ears, a remnant of the atrophied cockades.



Fig. 336. Mohra. Brass. Middle Sutlej. Mid fifteenth century. (Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba.)



Fig. 337. Front and lateral view of a mohra. Brass, 13.5 cm. Beas or Cis-Sutlej. Early fifteenth century. Some small masks that we believe date rather to the fifteenth century are of a distinct style, still reminiscent of late fourteenth century production because of their long faces with heavy, pointed chins. This one is a finely cast mohra with a striped background. Note the banana-like ears and the tragus treated as a relatively big hollowed discus. The trivali is interpreted as a collar. It became common also to depict two snakes with heads turning upwards and inwards in many mohras of the fifteenth century. The heads of the snakes are no longer seen in profile (although in this case the open mouth is clearly seen) but present an overhead view: the head is triangular and provided with two eyes. This pattern progressively replaces the profile of the bulbous-headed snake of the earlier folkish phase. The profile shows the characteristic beaked nose that seems specific to the later miniature masks of the Beas and the Cis-Sutlej. (Private collection.)





Fig. 338. Mohra. Bronze or copper, 12 cm. Middle or Cis-Sutlej. Early fifteenth century. Another small mohra, still reminiscent of the earlier folkish phase of the fourteenth century; however, the elements of the crown already assume the form of a flask-like pattern, so common in the latest phase. Note the two small lateral rings on the slightly waisted rim that are provided to fix the mohra on a support, a device which is also quite uncommon.



Fig. 339. Mohra. Brass. Middle or Cis-Sutlej. Mid fifteenth century. Note the elements of the crown which, by their flask-like design, are closer to the final phase, and also the elongated variety of the earrings, observed for the first time in mohra No. 324, and which will become typical in some late fifteenth century mohras. (Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba.)



Fig. 340. Mohra. Brass. 21 cm. Middle Sutlej. Second half of the fifteenth century. Snakes are now integrated with the rim, the flask-like design of the five elements of the crown has now reached its final stage. The hair of the eyebrows is engraved as is the moustache; the rim, progressing downwards from shoulder height, is also engraved with a zig-zag design and various patterns are chiselled on the trivali. Note how the overhead view of the snakes is depicted, with their eyes detailed. The lips in the V-shaped, stiff smile have a chiselled contour and the moustache is introduced here for the first time [if we exclude No. 321 (right) in which the moustache is probably a later addition]. The necklace is also of a different type which we have, however, already seen in Mohras Nos. 309 and 316 of the late classical or early folkish period, and earrings with an elongated central pear-shaped pattern become rather common in the later phase. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 341 Mohra. Brass, approx. 20 cm. Middle Sutlej. Second half of the fifteenth century. Very similar to the preceding mohra but with only one snake and a curious reminiscence of the upper rim turned inwards evocative of the shoulders (although in quite an incoherent and misunderstood way). We have already observed the trend towards archaism at the end of the folkish periods.



Fig. 342. Mohra. Brass or bronze, 16 cm. Middle Sutlej. Late fifteenth century. (Dated between 1584 and 1334 by thermoluminescence analysis; the mean value should be 1459). Very similar to mohra No. 340 and of a typical rough workman-ship. (Courtesy Spink & Son, London.)

Fig. 343. The report on the thermoluminescence analysis made from a sample of the core in the back of the head of mohra No. 342.

Fig. 344. This was to illustrate a brass mohra, but at a late stage in the preparation of this book, we were convinced that it is a fake; hence, it has been withdrawn.

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REPORT ON THERMOLUMINESCENCE ANALYSIS

made on sample: 381k60  
at the request of: Spink & Son Ltd. (London)

ORIGIN OF SAMPLE  
The sample was obtained in powder form, on 26th March 1984  
by Ben Janssens of Spink & Son  
The object from which the sample was taken was presumed to be:  
a bronze mask of Siva, Chamba (15th century A.D.) ref: SE 1.1448

It was reported to me that the position of sampling was:  
core from the back of the head  
The following sample, has also been obtained from this object:  
none

RESULT

Using standard methods and techniques it is estimated that material of the sample was last fired:  
between 400 and 650 years ago

This result is considered consistent with the suggested period of manufacture of the object concerned. The result is given in good faith; however the Laboratory takes no responsibility for financial loss incurred through an erroneous report being given.

SPECIAL COMMENT

none

Date 6th April 1984

Signed

RESEARCH LABORATORY FOR  
ARCHAEOLOGY  
AND  
THE HISTORY OF ART  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY

*David Ash*

This report should carry the laboratory stamp and be signed by M. J. Aulken or D. Staniham.

NOTES

- (i) If the object has suffered restoration it should be borne in mind that the component parts may be of differing antiquity. This report refers only to the part from which the sample was obtained.
- (ii) The analysis refers to the date of last firing. This may be different to the date of manufacture if the object has been refired. In some cases it is possible to determine whether or not this has been the case, and where this is so the result is stated under 'Special Comment'.
- (iii) In making this report it is assumed that the sample has not been exposed to irradiation with X-rays,  $\gamma$ -rays or neutrons.



Fig. 347. Mohra. Beas or Cis-Sutlej. Second half of the fifteenth century. (Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba.)



Fig. 345. Mohra of Devī. Brass, 15 cm. Middle Sutlej. Early sixteenth century (?). Completely typical both in its iconography and the newly introduced patterns such as head-dress, cranial ringlet, cockades with no diadem, upturned eye-brows, double earrings, necklace, studded and serrated rim, vertical stripes of the skirt and two small feet which clearly suggest, together with the cranial ringlet, that this mohra was meant to be hanged. (Courtesy Mr. M. Postel.)



Fig. 346. Mohra. 19 cm. Beas or Cis-Sutlej. Second half of the fifteenth century. (Private collection.)





Fig. 348. Front and lateral views of four mohras. Brass, from left to right : 7.5, 7.8, 8 and 9 cm. Beas or Cis-Sutlej. Second half of the fifteenth century. (Jālpādevī shrine, Dadla Ghat, Simla district.)



Fig. 350. Mohra. Brass, ca 5 cm. Beas. Second half of the fifteenth century. Bhuntar ratha (Kullu) at the Kullu Dussehra. Round heads, as seen in icons, are frequently encountered in the Kullu valley. No third eye on the high, bulging forehead.

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## TERMINAL PHASE OF CAST *MOHRAS* (Sixteenth to twentieth century)

We have seen that the style of brass icons underwent a drastic change in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries most probably linked with the advent of Rajput rulers and the foundation of a new capital in Mandi from where, it seems, a new aesthetic trend extended towards the Kullu valley, mainly characterized by oval- or pear-shaped faces.

This new trend probably introduced the rather exclusive propagation of embossing *mohras*, for the most part made of silver, and abandonment of the casting technique, thus implying the termination of the styles practised hitherto. A few *mohras* were, however, still cast in the new style and mark the end of the casting tradition: indeed they have nothing more in common with the two-century-old tradition we have described. A few *mohras* in the old folkish style which have been recently cast, definitely appear to be fakes, for the most part

moulded according to old prototypes, although they are pretentiously labelled as being of the late eighteenth or the nineteenth century, a date which is totally incompatible with their style.

The *mohras* finally cast are in all respects closely similar to their embossed prototypes and reflect the new tendency (Figs. 352 to 354):

- (1) they are relatively elongated, culminating in a simple or, more usually, a trefoiled arch;
- (2) the face is rounded, the appearance dry and stereotyped. No secondary sexual characteristics appear other than moustaches. Though the modelling is poor, the facial anatomy contrasts by its relative realism with the schematization of the previous folkish style;
- (3) although the crown is still treated in full relief in some specimens, in most *mohras* it is designed in low relief or is even flatly chased on the skull, as full *ronde bosse* treatment of such accessories does not suit the frailty of a thin silver sheet.

*Fig. 349. This was to illustrate a brass mohra, but at a late stage in the preparation of this book, we were convinced that it is a fake; hence, it has been withdrawn.*



*Fig. 351. Mohra. Brass, ca 7 cm. Beas. Second half of the fifteenth century. Rāmacandra temple ratha, Manikarn. The face is striped horizontally.*



Fig. 352. Mohra. Brass, ca 35 cm. Beas. Sixteenth-seventeenth century. Bajaura (Kullu valley). Note the serrated rim and the archaic patterns of the necklaces (compare with similar patterns in mohra No. 345) and the chantourné lateral view of the upper background. The dry modelling and low relief suggest the beginnings of embossed mohras.

Fig. 354. Mohra. Brass, ca 30 cm. Beas. Late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Ratha at the Kullu Dussehra. Although cast, this mohra in no way differs from the embossed ones except for the trefoiled arch. The casting is heavy and very rough. Note the hypertrophied tragus extending across the whole ear. In the lower right corner a date is recorded: Sam 44 (if the reading is correct), which, taking the palaeography into account, is equivalent to 1769 A.D.



Fig. 353. Mohra. Brass, ca 35 cm. Beas. Seventeenth century. Ratha at the Kullu Dussehra. Dry, academic mannerism, hardly distinct from the surrounding embossed mohras.

EMBOSSSED *MOHRAS*

EMBOSSSED *MOHRAS* ARE encountered exclusively in the eastern and central part of H.P., viz. the Middle Sutlej and the Beas, in which we include the Cis-Sutlej. Embossed silver and copper specimens by far outnumber the cast ones at the Kullu and Mandi fairs. Only a few of those embossed are ancient, most of them being of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as the older ones are frequently melted to make new ones. Some are said to be dated to the Laukika era and range from 1418 to 1753 (Goverdhan Singh, pp. 26 & 174); others, more numerous, are inscribed in Nāgarī instead of Tākri and are commonly dated either according to the Vikrama era or even the Christian era; these are mostly dated from the second half of the nineteenth century up to 1982. They are all, as a rule, mounted on a copper-plate, the edges of which are beaten over the rim of the silver-plate so as to form both a rigid support and a protective frame that prevents the ductile silver-plate from becoming deformed or crooked. The silver sheet is moulded by hammering its surface onto a grossly shaped model of pitch or tar. It is then polished, and details are finished by chasing and chiselling. Embossed *mohras* are stylistically far more conservative than the older cast *mohras*, so much so that one can hardly infer any definite evolutive trend therefrom, at least in the present stage of our knowledge.

From the sixteenth century onwards, a kind of semi-industrial "editing" process seems to have been established, which consists of moulding several sheets on the same permanent hard, perhaps wooden, model: rows of five or even more identical specimens, differing only slightly in chiselled details, are in no way uncommon. Although rare, double or even triple *mohras* embossed from the same silver-plate may be found.

The earliest known evidence of embossed silver *mohras* can, however, be traced back to the eleventh-twelfth centuries; these *mohras* are stylistically related to Pratihāra and Katyūri ornamental design, thus preceding the emergence of the cast brass *mohras* bearing Pāla influence. However, their frailty, which exposed them to a relatively quick degradation, resulted in the widespread practice of melting them to make new ones, and might explain why ancient specimens are so rare.

Less rare, but still small in number, are those bearing Tākri inscriptions and hence dating from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Bulk of the production is of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but still adheres to the stylistic renewal which took place in the sixteenth century, although in a progressively dry and stereotyped fashion.



Fig. 356. *Devī*. Embossed silver, 16 cm. Middle Sutelj, late eleventh or twelfth century. Palaeographically, both epigraphs appear to be later additions, and the one to the right has even been engraved on a portion that was reched for the purpose. The modelling becomes slightly drier and an engraved arris now emphasizes the eyebrows. Eyes are down-cast as in the classical cast *mohras*. The chin has become very small. (Private collection.)

We can thus classify embossed *mohras* into two main chronological groups:

- (1) An early group, ranging from the eleventh up to the late fifteenth century.
- (2) A modern group from the sixteenth century up to the present.

### 1. The Early Group (Middle Sutelj)

Specimens of the early group are critically too few to allow us to draw valid stylistic conclusions. However, it seems that the tradition of embossing followed a style rather different from that specific to cast *mohras*.

Facial features and ornaments at first recall the post-Gupta and Pratihāra tradition of North

India, with a propensity for minute and florid workmanship which later evolved towards a somewhat dry stereotype. Such production seems to have been concentrated in and around Nirmand, although a few other cruder *mohras* of this early phase have been found elsewhere, some of them being related to later developments in the folkish cast *mohras*.

In both inscriptions (one in eleventh-twelfth century Śāradā and a later one in sixteenth century Tākri) the subject is named *Devī*. The crown with the central *kīrtimukha* above a cartouche on which a peacock is designed (for Kaumārī, or possibly a *hamsa*, for Brahmanī) is treated as a mere cap instead of the usual diadem, because of the physical frailty of the thin silver sheet. Floral and foliated rincels fringe the head; the upper part of this fringe is retained in subsequent works while the lower portion, suggesting locks of hair, is discarded. Under the rim of the crown runs a fringe of well-defined curls; this later merges with the rim to form a purely ornamental studded band. The oval-shaped face has distinctive features: a beaked nose, a prominent mouth smiling slightly with a bi-parted lower lip, finely chased, extremely arched eyebrows and down-cast, protruding eyes. The outline is bell-shaped, with an intentionally curved lower portion.

In the earliest production (Figs. 355 to 358) facial features such as eyes, lips, chin and, more particularly, the profile are still strongly reminiscent of those of the early eighth century faces of Chamba such as Lakṣaṇā and Śakti Devīs. The profile in Fig. 358 can in this way be linked with that of Fig 50. The stylistic evolution of this particular style of embossed *mohras*, some of which are still worshipped in Nirmand and other villages of the Middle Sutelj, can be followed through Figs. 359 to 361.

Curiously, the cast *mohras* almost always depict Śiva or a male deity, while nearly all the early embossed *mohras*, even those made up to the early sixteenth century, are Devīs.

### 2. Modern Group (Kullu)

Modern *mohras* seem to have started in the late fifteenth or the early sixteenth century, when the embossers, like the casters, were subjected to the





Fig. 355. *Virabhadra* (?). Embossed silver, 22.5 cm. Middle Sulej, late tenth or eleventh century. The script reads *Virasaha* but, as is often the case with silver mohras, this might have been added at a later period. The modelling of the face is

realistic, and the crown of skulls is flattened for technical reasons. The tongue protrudes from the open mouth. (Private collection.)

Fig. 357. Mohras of Devī on the Mangaleshvar ratha (Kullu) at the Kullu Dussehra. Embossed silver, ca 15 to 20 cm. Middle Sutlej, twelfth (upper right), thirteenth (upper left), fourteenth (lower left) and fifteenth (lower right) centuries. The stylistic evolution between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries is strikingly summarized on this ratha by the following features:

- a progressive dryness and loss of modelling, and an elongation of the oval face;
- eyebrows and eyes are no longer, as at first, delineated by engravings and down-cast, but staring, treated as independent volumes; bulging eyes and eyebrows projecting as a gutter;
- the curls of hair on the forehead integrate with the rim of the diadem;
- the ornamental designs become less florid, less dense and more rigid and stiff;
- the mouth evolves from a conventional rendering with parted underlip into a rigid, stereotyped form;
- as in the cast mohras, snakes are at first seen in profile and, from the late fourteenth century onwards, present an overhead view;
- ears, at first flattened against the head, spread against the background;
- the third eye assumes a lozenge shape.



Fig. 358. Front and lateral view of Devī of the Mangaleshvar ratha. Embossed silver, ca 15 cm. Middle Sutlej (?), twelfth century. The profile is strongly reminiscent of the early classical one of Saktidevī (Fig. 50).



Fig. 360. *Devī*. Embossed silver, ca 20 cm. Middle Sutlej, late fourteenth or early fifteenth century Ambikā temple, Nirmand.



Fig. 359. *Devī*. Embossed silver, ca 15 cm. Middle Sutlej, mid fourteenth to early fifteenth century. Widespread ears (here placed in a high position) with triangular tragus and the rather geometrical conception of the face and its constitutive parts, and the two small, almost unnoticeable, breasts inside the heavy trapezoidal necklace with the central lozenge motif are features proper to the folkish style. Such embossed mohras are more commonly seen in Nirmand and its neighbouring villages. Studded trivali. The mouth is reduced to a pouting expression and the eyes are half closed. The snake, still in profile, is the only feature that permits attribution of such mohras to the fourteenth century instead of the fifteenth century. (Private collection.)



Fig. 361. *Devī*. Embossed silver, approx. 20 cm. Middle Sutlej, fifteenth century. As in the cast mohras of the same period, the chin and cheek-bones are emphasized. The snake is now seen from overhead and small floral motifs are now scattered in the background. (Private collection.)

steadily growing influence of Mandi's renewed sculptural style that was also marked by the construction of new temples, such as the Triloka-nātha and Bhūtanātha in Mandi (1520, 1526), the Hiḍimbādevī in Dhungri near Manali (1553), among others. This building activity extended up to as late as the seventeenth century. The *mohras* are hardly datable, for they display a very strong conservation, to judge from specimens dated over the last forty years, but we may admit that the oldest among them still bear a close resemblance to the final production of the earlier period.

The main changes are:

- the switch from Devī to Śiva or Viṣṇu, who are invariably individualized, endowed with a moustache, and often, the physiognomy of a ruler of Kullu;
- elongated, oval-shaped heads which progressively assume the shape of a perfect egg, with a small forehead and skull;
- the forehead is marked with two fish-tail shaped curls which seems to have evolved into two vertical patterns in the eighteenth century;
- big, staring, almond-shaped eyes; sometimes with pupils chased with precious stones;
- long sharp-edged noses;
- the third eye often becomes a floral pattern or a patch;
- a steady abandonment of facial modelling;
- precious and semi-precious stones are sometimes chased in the sectarian mark on the forehead, in pendentives or even in the eyes;
- eyebrows, eyelids, moustaches and lips are sometimes gilded.

The embossed silver and partly gilded *mohras* of Siddha Pāl, king of Kullu and Lahaul (1500-1530) in Naggar, which are dated to 1501, that is, the very early years of his reign, are magnificently put amongst less splendid copies of themselves, which provide evidence that royal portraits made their appearance in Kullu (Fig. 362) at the turn of the fifteenth century.

Embossed silver *mohras* are sometimes gilded, but even then gold is sparingly applied only on the moustaches, eyebrows and lips. Still more exceptional are the inlays of precious stones enhancing, as at present, the sectarian mark on the forehead,

the pupils of the eyes, the pendants of the necklace. Although the look is truly hieratic and stereotyped in quite a stiff way, some *mohras* indeed display such individualistic marks that we can take for granted that they are at least a tentative rendering of the portrait of a particular king. As was the case in Europe's *ancien régime*, and in most ancient societies, the king was a divine representative in his kingdom and could even have been considered God's reflection amongst his subjects. Such a deification of the king has been common everywhere in India, and more particularly amongst the Rajputs, some of whom moved northwards and settled in the hills as early as in the fifteenth century. As may be noticed, Rajasthani features have repeatedly been pointed out in fifteenth and sixteenth century sculptures in Himachal. Moustaches often give these *mohras* a definitely Rajput character, inasmuch as they are different from the fine moustaches worn by the hilly tribes when they used to have them.

We must now remember that real portraiture has been, in the history of art, an exceptional feature that occurred only in some periods and countries: a few portraits are known in Ancient Egypt, Classical Greece and Imperial Rome, where artists became well acquainted with that sort of realism, which again almost disappeared in Europe until the dawn of the fifteenth century.

Except for a very few cases in Orissa and South India, the art of portraiture was imported into India with the advent of the Mughal rulers, and was subsequently adopted by the Rajputs, in, however, quite a more stereotyped conceptual frame.

But realism in portraiture by no way means that realism is the only criterion which enables us to distinguish a portrait. If we look at faces commonly depicted in Egypt or in Medieval Europe, we are at first struck by the conventional stereotypy of all faces according to salient racial or ethnical features, until we start recognizing and isolating some minor but unmistakably individualistic traits such as prognathism, the particular and uncommon bend of the nose, moustaches or, as in the present case of the *mohras* of Siddha Pāl, a quite well-defined small lug under the lip, and other particular marks by which the artist was able to individualize an otherwise totally anonymous and conventional





Fig. 363. *Siddha Pāl as Viṣṇu amongst other possible "god-kings" of Kullu. Embossed silver, some chased with stones. Beas, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Rāmacandra ratha, Basisht. Siddha Pāl appears in the middle of the two lower rows and on the left and right side of the upper row. The name of another king might occur in some of the other dated mohras.*

rendering of the human face. Indeed, ethnic features are unmistakably noticeable in "dynastic" schools of art in India, such as the Coḷa, Eastern Gaṅga, Pāla, Caḷukya and Koṅkaṇī.

When comparing the *mohras* displayed on some *rathas* such as those in Figs. 363 to 366, with an eye adapted to the proper perspective and semiotics of the people who made them, one cannot fail to recognize amongst some of them other portraits of Siddha Pāl and most probably other kings individualized by their moustaches and sectarian marks (on the same *ratha* in Fig. 363, both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *mohras* appear) or even by a rather mon-

goloid and beardless facial feature. We have already pointed out the Rajput way of wearing long and heavy moustaches, and know that Rajputs indeed moved from Rajasthan up into the hills where they introduced some of their own customs and fashions in the courts. Amongst such cultural infiltrations, Pahari Rajput painting constitutes a well known fact and on the eve of the fifteenth century we find further evidence of Rajput fashion in the attempts of local craftsmen to adapt it in royal portraits that were to represent the dynastic or royal god, either Viṣṇu or Śiva.

Such an innovation chronologically tallies with many others we have already noticed at the turn of the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries.

We were unfortunately not always allowed to closely examine some of these would-be portraits bearing inscriptions with the names of kings and dates. No doubt, further investigation in this direction would make it possible, by cross-checking, to reach a well-defined chronological sequence of *mohras* related to kings.

However, the tradition of embossing *mohras* of Devī still persists in many respects in the older fashion, but for the mouth which is more naturally and less conventionally depicted. The nine *mohras* of the twin goddess Docā-Mocā in Karjan (near Naggar, Kullu valley) of which we illustrate the four main variants, are indeed still embossed following the late medieval folkish style of the Middle Sutlej (Figs. 367 to 370), although we did not come across evidence that the Middle Sutlej was still active. It seems, on the contrary, that from the sixteenth century onwards Kullu remained the only active centre of Eastern H.P.

It is evident that the Middle Sutlej area faced a severe economic drawback from the late fifteenth century onwards due to which, perhaps, so many early *mohras*, both cast and embossed, were kept in shrines and *bhandars*, thus escaping the fate of being melted into new ones according to the custom which started to prevail in Kullu where, on the contrary, a steadily growing economic boom prompted the silversmith to make new *mohras* from old ones. Hence their existence in so many places in the Middle Sutlej (Behena, Bail, Khekshu, Tikri) where early *mohras* are to be seen, contrasting





*Figs. 365 and 366. Mohras of presumably other "god-kings" of Kullu. Embossed silver with inlaid stones, Beas, seventeenth-eighteenth century, unidentified rathas at Kullu Dussehra.*



*Fig. 364. Mohras of presumably another "god-king" of Kullu. Embossed silver with inlaid stones. Beas, sixteenth-seventeenth century. Dashmi Barda ratha (Kullu).*

*Fig. 362. Siddha Pāl as Viṣṇu. Embossed silver, partly gilded and chased with precious stones, ca 25 cm. Beas (Kullu), 1501 A.D. Sajla ratha (Kullu). The inscription gives the date 1501 (Śakakāla 1422), the name of Siddha Pāl (ca 1500-1530), king of Lahaul and Kullu. Refer to the text for comments.*







Figs. 367 to 370. (From left to right and top to bottom) Devīs. Embossed silver, ca 20 cm. each. Beas, second half of the seventeenth century, Karjan temple (Kullu). The inscription in Fig. 367 gives the date of 1650 A.D. (Sam. 1707) and the name of king Jagat Singh of Kullu (1637-1672), while that of Fig. 370, dated 1695 A.D. (70 Laukika), mentions the name of king Mān Singh of Kullu (1688-1719). The inscription

in Fig. 369 dated 1892 A.D. (Sam. 1949), is a later addition like that in Fig. 368. Note the two fish-tail-shaped curls on the forehead in all four, like those appearing in many other mohras. This design seems to have evolved later into two vertical patterns. Note also the identical necklace in the last three figures.







Fig. 371. Mohra, on a ratha at the Kullu Dussehra. Embossed silver, ca 30 cm. 1680 A.D. Beas (Kullu). The inscription gives the date of 1662 A.D. (Sam. 1719). The style is the

final stage of the older folkish phase. Note the design of the ears and tragus.



Figs. 372 and 373. Two mohras of presumably the "god-king" Tedhi (or Tej) Singh of Kullu. Embossed silver, ca 25 cm., 1742 and 1747, Beas (Kullu). Both inscriptions contain the name of king Tedhi (or Tej) Singh (1742-1767); the one on the left is dated 1742 (17 Laukika), the other 1747

(22 Laukika). The individualistic mark is here the dimple parting the two halves of the wing-shaped moustache. Note the occurrence of the two vertical stripes and the atrophied curls on the forehead in the 1747 specimen.

with the relative scarcity of such early *mohras* in Kullu. Only a few silver embossed *mohras* from the Middle Sutlej are known to us.

We know of only four specimens in Kasholigad (Fig. 374), five on the Bali ratha (Fig. 285), and eleven in Dhropa which we were, however, not allowed to photograph.

The characteristics of the Middle Sutlej are:

- a continuation of the late medieval style into which the modern style of Kullu merges;
- ears that are spread against the background;
- a background scattered with a few floral patterns;
- a paucity of technical skill.

In Mandi, we came across many *mohras* of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some of them being double (Fig. 375), characterized by an archaic trend and stylistic borrowings from the later folkish medieval period (late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries); they display a syncretism that became common, it seems, under the impulses of the Company and other later eclectic styles amongst which we recognize some iconographic features of the Bengali Kālī cult (Fig. 378).

In concluding, we might briefly allude to some uncommon *mohras* such as those depicting leonine faces related to Narasimha, so much venerated in Himachal (Figs. 379, 380), and to miniature silver masks.



Fig. 376. Devatā Garga Rṣi. Embossed silver, ca 20 cm. Beas (Kullu). This mohra is typical of the many modern ones of the nineteenth and twentieth century seen at the Kullu Dussehra. It is dated 1944 (Sainvat 2001) and displays the traditional mid eighteenth century style.



Fig. 374. Two mohras. Embossed silver, approx. 22 and 30 cm. Middle Sutlej, seventeenth-eighteenth century, Chambu temple, Kasholigad.

Fig. 375. Mohras. Embossed silver, ca 20 cm. Beas, late nineteenth century, Mandi Śivarātri. The upper mohra is dated 1881 (Sam. 1938); the lower is a double. They are typical of the archaic eclecticism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Fig. 377. Devatā. Embossed silver, ca 20 cm. Beas (Kullu), 1958. Katroni ratha (Mandi). The inscription reads "Sam. 2015 San 1958".







Fig. 378. Mohra of Kālī in the Bengali style. Embossed silver with tongue painted in red. Beas, twentieth century. Ratha at Mandi Śivarātri.



Fig. 379. Mohras of lions. Embossed silver, diameters varying between ca 15 cm. and 10 cm. Beas (Kullu), eighteenth century. Tripurasundarī ratha at the Kullu Dussehra.

Fig. 380. Masāṇa Devatā. Embossed copper, 27 cm. Beas (Mandi), eighteenth century. Mahun Nag shrine, Gutkar (Mandi).

Fig. 381. Miniature mohra. Embossed silver, 12 cm. Middle Sutlej, late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. (Private collection.)

Fig. 382. Miniature mohra. Embossed silver, 5.5 cm. Beas (Kullu), twentieth century. (Private collection.)





## FAKE OR GENUINE WORKMANSHIP?

IN THE INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER of Part Two we have seen how the lost wax technique makes it possible to produce a unique specimen. But a copy of work already cast, like a *mohra*, can also be quite easily produced by imprinting it in plaster or clay, which in turn will be used as a permanent mould from which wax specimens can be reproduced and cast. Such "editing" of icons was already known of yore, to judge from a tenth-eleventh century later Gilgit Mañjuśrī illustrated in Neven's *Sculptures des Indes*, 1978, No. 33 A & B, four identical specimens of which are known to us at present. However, we have never encountered such cases in the brass icons of Eastern Himachal Pradesh, which are too elaborate to allow such a process; although they occasionally show many similarities, they are all different. When two brasses are identical, one is often a genuine original from which a mould of its different parts has been made; the faked specimen can only be detected by a thorough examination that would bring to light some minor misunderstood features. We have also described how embossed works could be "edited" by way of a wooden or pitch nucleus on which a thin sheet of metal is beaten into shape.

In the case of Fig. 204, of which, as stated in the caption, at least three specimens are known to us, we must insist on the fact that all three differ in their dimensions, bases, and minor, but neverthe-

less significant, details. This not only means that the same icon was repeated in the same locality or workshop within a short span of time but also that the caster introduced slight variations in every new specimen. When two icons are of the same size, we have often to suspect that at least one of them is a subsequent copy and is therefore a fake. This is not only true for relatively elaborate images, but even more so in the cases when we have to deal with small, crude, rough, easily made icons which are never similar in every aspect, for it would have required too much care and time for the caster to copy his own work. Here the fake is unmasked by the fact that several identical small brasses differ only by way of a small base-plate (often totally inconsistent with the style) or a vault or a finial that has been added or omitted.

It is noteworthy to observe that in the eastern part of Himachal Pradesh, we never came across any figure of Durgā Maḥiṣāsura-mardīnī isolated from its context, that is, the buffalo, the base and the background. Hence we suspect that some small isolated brasses of Durgā Maḥiṣāsura-mardīnī could be fakes.

Modern copies of original works can thus be easily made by moulding, and they are, unfortunately, not at all infrequent; while a trained eye can, in some obvious cases of overmoulding, detect

the fraud through some apparent defects and technically abnormal features, more often the fraud comes to light when a copy appears on the market and is published in an auction catalogue, or when a collector encounters one of his "own" pieces in another collection.

Some fakers go even further in successfully creating "original" bronzes and brasses in a well-defined style, and selling them to collectors and even museums either as "genuine antiques", or as pieces representative of "genuine folk art and craftsmanship". In many cases the fake proves to be too gross and naive: iconographic oddities, a mixture of different styles and different periods, unmask the fraud as is obviously the case in Fig. 392. But a very few artists display real talent, amongst them a well known artist from Delhi, in editing "folk" bronzes which have all the appearances of genuine old creations, some specimens of which are to be seen in museums (Simla Museum, Crafts Museum in Delhi) and private collections.

While in some cases we do have to deal with "genuine craftsmanship", we do not agree that such a label could implicitly induce people to believe that such works are "genuine" in the strictest sense of the word, as they can in no way be integrated within the concept of true folk art: they are either fancies or fakes and the boundary between the two terms is only a question of commercial value. There are so many hundreds of fakes that we feel it our duty and part of our deontology to sound a warning against such frauds. Still more astonishing are the replicas and reduced copies, some of them even in iron, made in Patan (Nepal), of one of the Tārās in Chhatradi's Śāktidevī temple (Fig. 397), not published to date. We even know of at least two reduced copies, ca 40 cm. in height, of the Vaikunṭhanātha of the Hari Rai temple in Chamba with badly inlaid eyes and heavy, patched features, one of which has been published in Sotheby's catalogue of the auction of 29th and 30th March 1982, No. 183, and soon came to be recognized as a copy.

Even "genuine" looking black patinas can be obtained by a sulphur heating process, or a green copper patina by burying a fake brass or bronze in earth mixed with grass; spraying urine regularly on the spot where the "hoard" is buried hastens the

process of oxidization which, however, remains superficial and unevenly distributed with spots. A false patina achieved with green-dyed wax application is fairly common but can be easily detected; however, an artificial patina could even be given to genuine pieces such as classical *mohras* to alter a too bright and "modern" appearance. Even the worn aspect can be artificial, as metal icons are submitted to a buffing process which gives them the appearance of having been used for *pūjā* for centuries.

Fakes of Himachali brass icons and *mohras* are far more numerous than we expected: some dealers, collectors and museums now literally overflow with fakes, and some of them, it must be admitted, would never have been detected had we not had the opportunity to take more than a thousand photographs which enabled us to integrate them into coherent stylistic and chronological sequences.

Indeed, some items, very convincing at first sight, did not properly fit into these sequences and, on a closer critical analysis, they proved to be hybrid copies of two or more items of different epochs and styles in which, on further scrutiny, the faker betrayed himself by a dull and unsure execution of some details which he obviously did not understand well, as such details become significant and coherent only when seen in their sequential stylistic context, a fact the faker could have known only if he had devoted himself to the job we did. This is particularly true of faked *mohras* of the early classical period of the Middle Sutlej which, had we not ruled them out of our final chronological and stylistic sequence, would have considerably disturbed the process, drastically shortening the time-span of morphologic and semi-otic developments. It becomes indeed obvious that a *mohra* which simultaneously emphasizes characteristics of both a ninth-tenth century and a thirteenth century well-defined published *mohra* cannot but be a fake.

Particularly numerous are the smaller, later folkish *mohras* of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, for they can be easily reproduced. Many of these are betrayed by some added embellishments which are never to be seen in the originals, and one author has even published such a piece on the jacket of a book he devotes to folk art, on which a

Himachali *mohra* with a typical Nepali *yantra* on the base appears. Other items are given a "tantric" touch like the curious inverted V-shaped hooked motif of the fourteenth-fifteenth century Cis-Sutlej brasses, which, used as a device in front of Durgā, suggests a rather crude form of a *liṅga* (Aryan, *Rural Art of the Western Himalaya*, No. 47).

We can even attempt to set out some favourite themes of additions that are specific to one particular maker: attendants holding a small basket with a huge arched handle; a mixture of several styles and epochs in *mohras* of an alloy, sometimes whitish, with many necklaces and snakes; redesigning of the spiral-shaped S of the ears—flabby folk art, which, even though it be classical, has always a touch of operette scenery.



Fig. 383. Mohra. Brass, 24 cm. Simla Museum. At least three specimens of this moulded mohra are known to us: this one in the Simla Museum, another in a private American collection, and yet another that was published in Aryan's Folk Bronzes, No. 84. The Simla Museum specimen was bought for Rs. 500/- which, of course, is the price for "genuine contemporary workmanship", while the American specimen was sold at quite a different price, as a "genuine piece of ancient folk art". As in the case of most of such faked moulded copies, the back is unusually even and smooth. The appearance is dull and flabby, and some details have been lost in the moulding process, such as the heads of the snakes, some beads of the necklace, and the design of the inner parts of the ears. They are invariably absent in all the three specimens. The slope of the left shoulder has been "corrected" (the moulding of the rim being absent), and an additional feature appears at the top: a hollowed small bun provided to suspend the mohra, which is, in the present case, completely irrelevant.

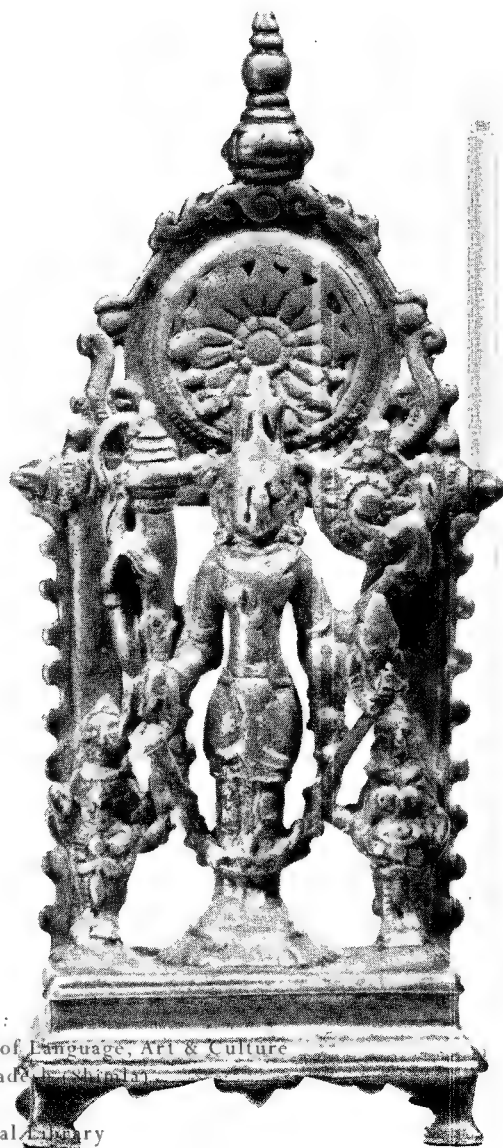


Fig. 384. Viṣṇu. Brass, 21.5 cm. Northern U.P. or Eastern H.P. Late twelfth or early thirteenth century. A late classical brass linked with the Middle Sutlej early folk style. An identical brass, but for two or three very faint differences, and worn out in the same way (which indicates that it has been moulded) has been published in Aryan's Folk Bronzes, No. 49. (Courtesy Mr. Jan Miog.)



Fig. 385. Śiva, the Liṅga and Pārvatī. Brass or bronze, eyes inlaid with electrum, ca 15 cm. The flabbiness of this fanciful work imitates worn features. Although this is a curio with no connections whatsoever either with traditional or folk art, some dealers are tempted to export it from India as "genuine folk art of H.P."

Fig. 386. Mohra. Brass. Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. No comments are needed, as its fanciful nature in itself is so convincing in the context of this book.



Fig. 387. Mohra. Brass or bronze, 18 cm. Simla Museum. One of the many copies cast from the mould of an embossed silver original specimen of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The work is exceptionally dull and flabby.





Fig. 388. Two mohras. Brass, 17.5 cm. Simla Museum. Two identical flabby copies cast from a mould taken from an original specimen of the late fifteenth century and closely related to Fig. 340.

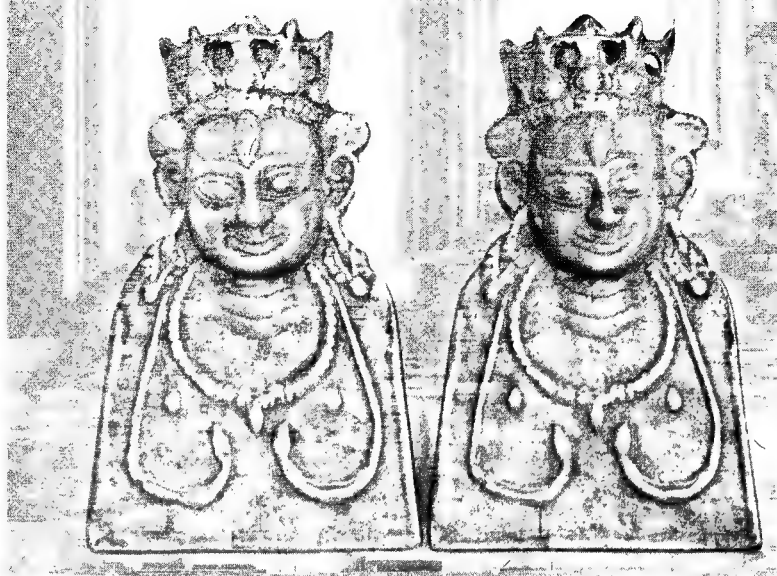


Fig. 390. Mohra. Brass, 17 cm. Another fake according to the Khekshu type of fifteenth century mohras (Figs. 334 and 335): no eyebrows, no third eye (replaced here by the root of the uncommonly long and sharp nose); we have already seen the design of the ears to which the faker has added an additional earring besides the usual beads put on the spirals and the elements of the crown. A final very original and personal touch is provided with the zig-zag snakes oddly placed, with tails trailing from the top of the head and the small, well-shaped breasts, very neatly encircled.



Fig. 389. Front and back views of a mohra. Whitish alloy, 14.5 cm. Simla Museum. The whitish alloy (which is distinct from bell metal) is very uncommon and usually related to fakes or doubtful works. This mohra is a modern but convincing moulded copy of a genuine folkish one. The polish is recent, as the rough surface still exists on either side of the snakes, the necklace, the mouth, the nose and the eyes. The heads of the snakes are not detailed. The surface of the back, of an uncommon and technically modern, finely granulated evenness, with a sharp-edged rim, strikingly contrasts with the worn aspect of the front.



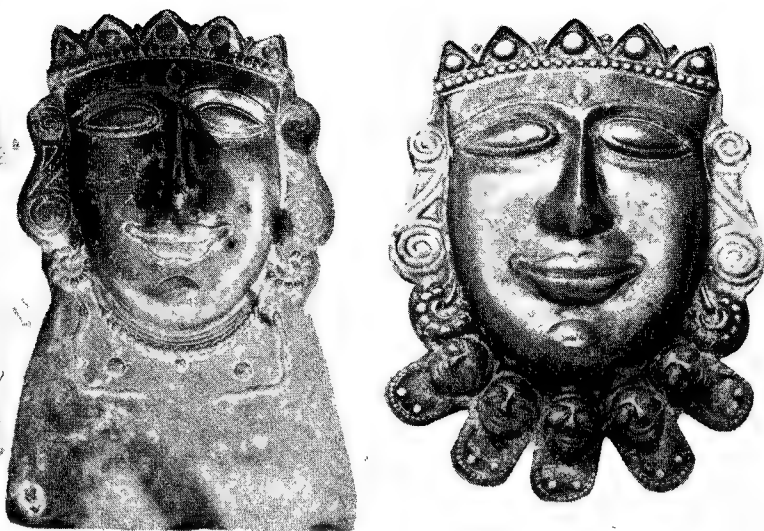


Fig. 391. Two mohras. Brass. Crafts Museum, New Delhi. To this pair of original creations we may add another copy of the one on the right, published in Aryan's Rural Art, No. 45, next to which is a further copy with some additional small snakes of the late classical mohra discussed in Fig. 303; we must also mention that Fig. 43 in the same Rural Art is, of course, a copy of our own Fig. 304, with snakes as an added embellishment, and the lost left lower corner restored. Indeed in later classical mohras such short snakes with an overhead view never occur.

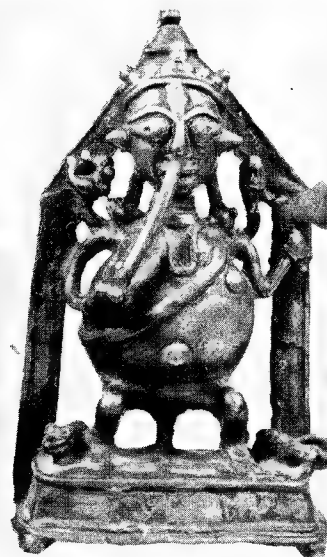


Fig. 393. Gaṇeśa. Brass, 14.5 cm. A modern copy from a mould taken from the original illustrated in Fig. 230.



Fig. 392. Viṣṇu. Brass. Crafts Museum, Delhi. Dull, flabby, out of axis, a completely modern and original work from various classical and late classical prototypes of different styles and epochs. All noses have been flattened to give a worn appearance, and Garuḍa is of a definitely late folkish style that could not have been conceived in the late classical or early folkish period. The elements of the upper part of the prabhā are a clumsy attempt to interpret parts of the prototypes in an absolutely misunderstood and incoherent way. The pilasters are not even perpendicular to the base nor do they fit into their proper place. Finally, it is obvious that each component has been cast separately and soldered onto the base. That such a curio, however nice it may look, could be presented as either "genuine craftsmanship" or "folkish art", is a highly debatable statement.



Fig. 395. Mahādeva. Brass, 20 cm. The left one is from the Crafts Museum, Delhi. Two more specimens of this "folk-bronze", all with slight variations but of the same size, implying the casting of the mean wax parts in a permanent mould, have been published respectively in P. Jayakar's *The Earthen Drum*, p. 207 and in S. Kramrisch's *Manifestations of Śiva*, No. 98 (this last one being only 17 cm., in height with a plain base and no prabha). Needless to say, all are mouldings from a modern original creation.



Fig. 394. Mohra. Brass, ca 15 cm. A mixture of different styles and epochs in which we again come across favourite patterns which some fakers use as a signature: crown with seven elements, huge, well-shaped cockades, striped necklace, new design for the ears, and earrings with a heavy median ball. However, the faker omitted the third eye and the lower rim of the background.



Fig. 396. Viṣṇu. Brass. Crafts Museum, Delhi. A moulded copy of the less dubious specimen in the Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba (see Fig. 256). The error is obvious here. The faker has added his own creation of a small figure of Garuḍa of a totally different brand, both stylistic and chronological, without being aware of the significance of the wings designed on both the thighs of Viṣṇu which he took for the folds of the paridhāna.



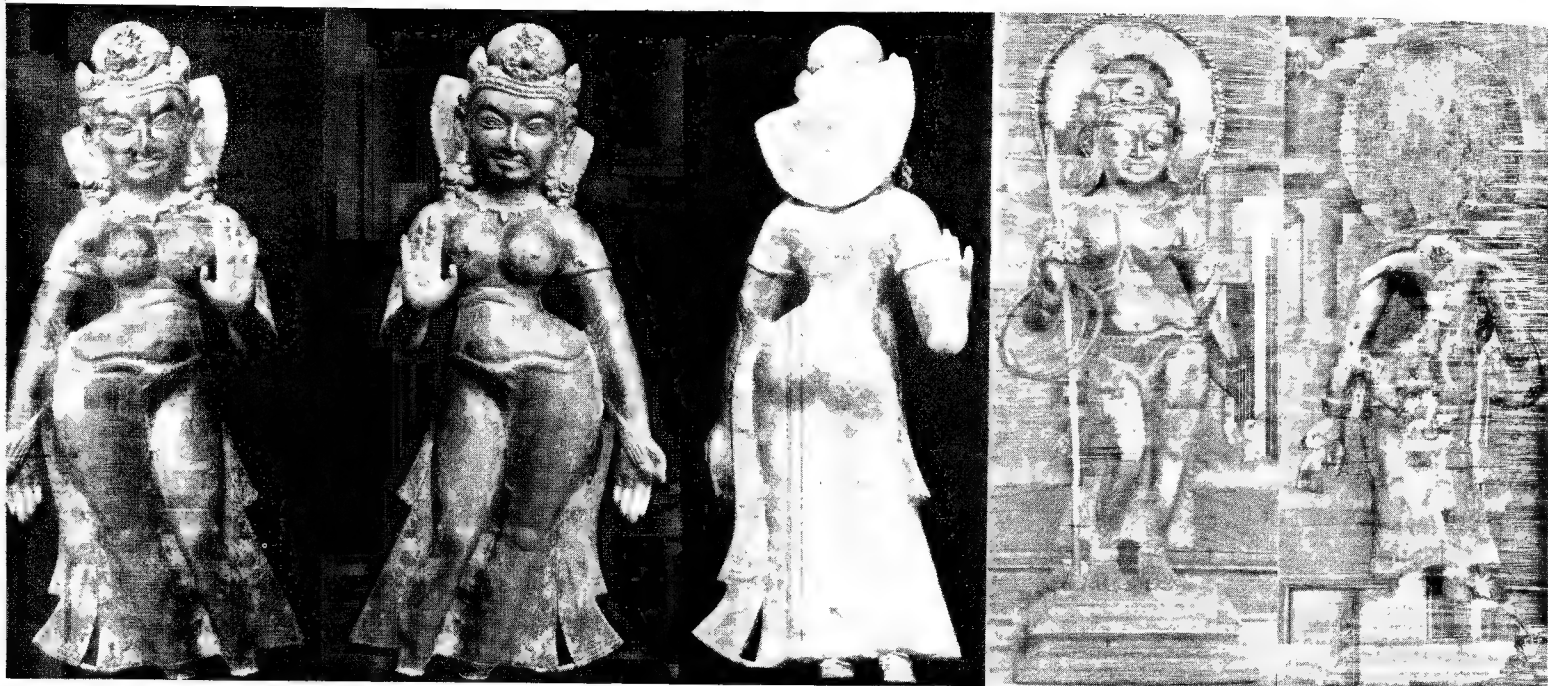


Fig. 397. Tārā. Cast-iron. Nepal. A shows the "original", B is the same, but the photo has been reversed for a comparative purpose.

A strange case: first the alloy, which is cast-iron. Iron is very uncommon, and we recollect a Nepalese cast-iron Avalokiteśvara icon, which proved to be a modern fake.

Secondly, at least another such cast-iron Tārā has been seen by one of us.

Thirdly, we were very surprised to discover recently, in two shops near the Durbar Square of Patan (Nepal), at least two copies of the Tārā of Chhatradi which we had seen in situ just a few months before. One of the copies was of about the actual size; the other was smaller.

A rather perturbing combination of observations: all of them cast-iron fakes and copies of the Chhatradi Tārā, observed in Patan since at least thirteen years (this cast iron specimen appeared in the market in 1972), thus ruling out the hypothesis of an accidental similarity.

For a more evident comparison, we will now refer to the inversed figure B of the cast-iron Nepalese Tārā (front and back view), so that it tallies with the front and back views of the Chhatradi "prototype". We need only to point out the following striking similarities:

- nimbus with studded rim which is very unusual in Nepal.
- crown and bun of the same design;
- eyes with pupils engraved;

- beaked nose and the same modelling of mouth and face;
- the same over-emphasized triple flexion of the bodies with similar breasts, bulging belly and hypertrophied hip;
- the same position of the "left" arm and hand with, in the cast-iron specimen, an interpretation of the extremity of the dopaṭṭā combined with a small fruit as in the prototype;
- the same wave-like bend of the belt;
- the same relief and position of thighs and legs both in the front and back views, the same disproportion between the left and right thighs. The way the feet are placed in the cast-iron specimen excludes the possibility that it has even been standing at all. Fleshy folds under the breast have been clumsily added later, and the flabby appearance of the cast leaves no doubt about the nature of this fake which is the result of assembled components moulded in a matrix.

Up to the present, the Tārā of Chhatradi was known only by a quite accurate front drawing made from a photograph and published by Goetz in his *Early Wooden Temples of Chamba* (Fig. 10, p. 87). In this drawing, the dopaṭṭā on the right arm had been omitted, as it is in the present copy, and, as it was — if we remember well — on the better ones we saw in Patan.

This example shows how fakers sometimes try to select a prototype that has every chance of remaining unknown in a distant and remote place in the Hills, thus limiting the chances for the forgery to be unmasked. However, the temptation to proceed with other copies is too great, so that the fakes are finally discovered in course of time.





Fig. 398. *Narasimha*. Bronze or copper, 15.5 cm. Allegedly Chamba. Tenth-eleventh century. The work is dull, the appearance slabby, and details seem to be evenly worn out and covered by a curious brownish patina. The modelling seems to have been erased in some places. In fact, this is a bronze edited on an industrial scale in Delhi and of which another identical specimen was seen in Bombay.



Fig. 399. *Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī* of the folkish style is never cast separately from her context, that is the buffalo on which she stands, the base and the background. The sacrificial thread which she never wears is put inversely, that is on the right shoulder, and the S-shaped spiralled ears that are asymmetrically but never bear a central pearl except in some faked mohras. An identical brass *Durgā* has been published in Aryan's *Folk Bronzes of North-Western India*, No. 93, p. 100; except for the flat base on which she stands and which is also anachronistic, as such bases occur only in the later seventeenth century style, and still another, with no base plate, in P. Jayakar's *Earthen Drum*, p. 277.

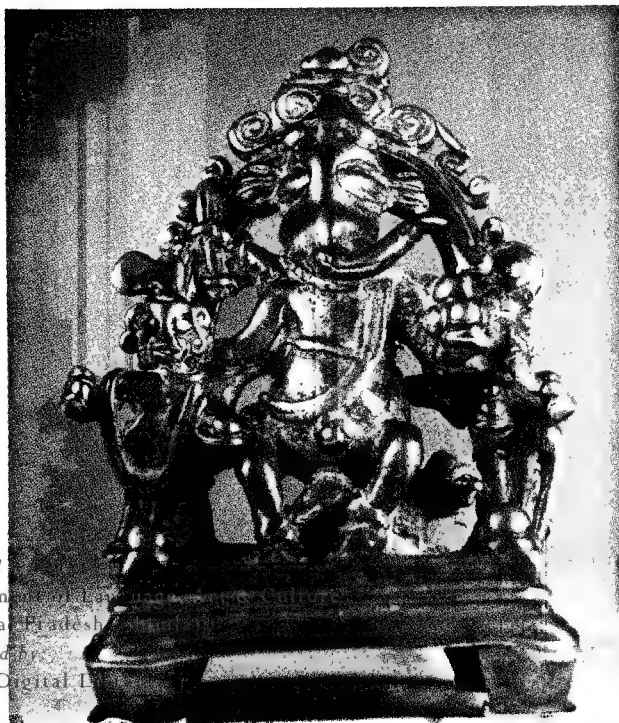


Fig. 400. *Ganeśa*. Brass. Allegedly Kullu. Badly cast, and curious, uneven patina: green cuprite on the base, brownish on the subject. The base is specific to the earlier phase of these folk brasses. Trunk and ears do not match with this later fifteenth century style (the trunk should be nearly straight: compare with Fig. 230). The attributes of the upper pair of arms should display a lotus, designed as an umbrella, and a hollowed discus. Here the lotus becomes something like rather a typical mace, and the discus is interpreted as a shield. In the folkish brasses of eastern Himachal Pradesh, *Ganeśa* never appears with two consorts, *Siddhi* and *Buddhi*, who are here, furthermore, confused with two male figures holding odd attributes amongst which a small basket with arched handle (a favourite implement of the faker's paraphernalia). Offerings are kept on the sides of the base, a rather Deccani feature but which appears on other faked brasses. The S-spiralled ears of the attendants are put asymmetrically (a "signature" of the faker) and the motif topping the mandorla has never been met with as such in Himachali brasses.

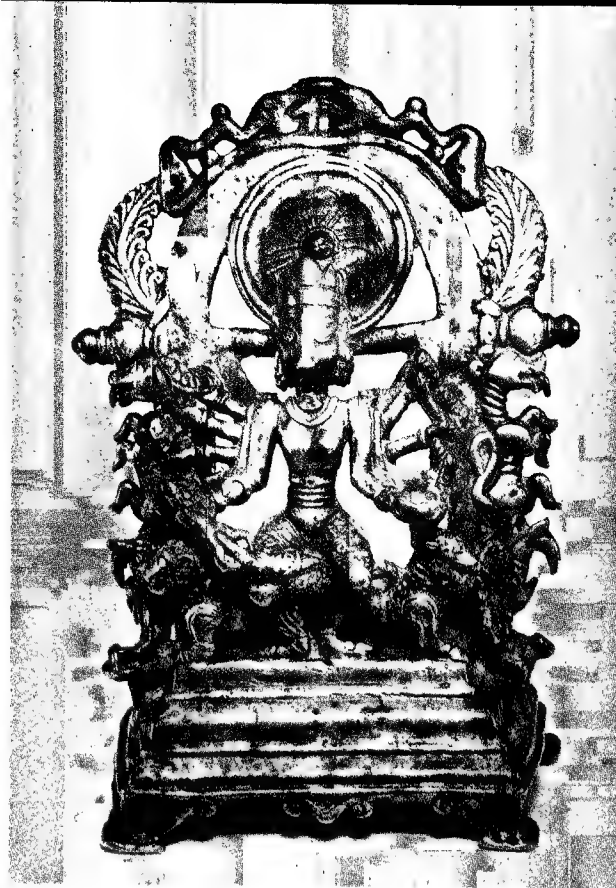


Fig. 401. Twelve-armed Durgā (?). Brass, 18 cm. Allegedly Middle Sutlej. A quite convincing and impressive fake of the same stylistic brand as that of Fig. 204 which has inspired the faker. The first shocking evidences are the unevenness of patina and the never encountered huge palm-leaf shape projecting upwards, from where the finial of the cross-bar projects outside of the vault. The upper finial of the mandorla has in its flabbiness and morphological incoherence all the appearance of a detail copied after a published prototype. The prabhāvali (nimbus) and the crown are engraved, not cast. The face is rendered in a fanciful manner: neither frankly that of a human, a bear, a boar, or whatever. The neck should be ringed in a quite distinct and incontrovertible way. The final blow comes with the iconography. Durgā on two lions is never encountered in eastern Himachal, as it is, it seems at least, exclusively specific to Chamba and Lahaul, and the lions are furthermore, too convincingly rendered: this was an addition in which the faker could freely display his creativity. Attributes are not in conformity with the traditional ones of the Himachali Durgā, and the two attendants are without any significance and have both the same small basket-like attribute as in the case of the attendants of Gaṇeśa. Durgā's spear is uncommonly short and should be killing the buffalo. A cunning trick can be observed in the fact that the two upper arms are broken (an usual evidence of genuineness) and even the remaining head of the sword can be seen on the nimbus. The work is dull and technically very flabby, in contrast with the skill and mastership displayed in the few published prototypes of this early folkish phase of eastern Himachal Pradesh.



Fig. 403. Mohra. Whitish metal, 19.2 cm. Allegedly Eastern H.P. Another convincing fake. At first, whitish metal is highly dubious as it appears commonly in faked mohras of the Simla Museum and elsewhere. Uneven greenish patina, and zig-zag snakes of the bulbous-headed variety seen in profile (we should, in this stylistic phase, expect them to appear as seen from above), placed in a not very common way, with the tail in the lower corners instead of trailing from the shoulder, are also pointers. The face—with emphasized pointed chin and unevenly placed cheek-bones, protruding in front instead of laterally, and its elongated proportion, the design of the mouth and of the eyebrows (which should be in a straight continuous vertical line) and the too small third eye—proves to be fully out of any definite style, being, on the contrary, a mixture of different types of styles and epochs.



Fig. 404. Mohra. Brass. Allegedly Eastern H.P., fifteenth century. Here we have a typical and perfectly representative work of the Delhi faker we alluded to. The prototypes must be seen in Khekshu (Figs. 334 and 335), and the style is well interpreted in the face except for the vertical slightly engraved stripes on the eyebrows. Ears are fanciful with, once more, a small pearl in the midst of each spiral; the design of the two necklaces and the whole lower part is fancy, for we never come across such a multiplication of snakes (a bulbous-headed one and two others seen as from above), nor a row of three horizontal parallel stripes, nor the three spirals.



Fig. 402. Mohra. Brass, 11.5 cm. Allegedly eastern H.P. Fifteenth century. At first the work seems genuine, but the stand is a nonsensical, as a common rule states that such mohras are fixed on a ratha by the means of a thread, and many mohras are even provided with lateral small holes. Further, there is evidence of a flagrant over-ornamentation of studded rims and accessories, such as the crown too minutely detailed, and the elaborate necklaces (a favourite theme in the faker's repertoire) the lower one being provided with a pendant shaped as a talisman which as such never occurs on mohras. It seems that two half erased or "worn out" akṣaras are engraved on the lower part, and which are an incoherent rendering of the Tākri script for "Devī".



Fig. 405. Mohra. Brass (?), 14.3 cm. Allegedly Eastern H.P., fifteenth century. In the style which is here interpreted, there is always an almost horizontal and continuous moulding for the eyebrows and, also, a third eye. Small pupils are engraved on the eyes, nostrils on both sides of the nose, features which are never encountered. The crown is a pure fancy occurring on many of the fully characteristic fakes of the Delhi workshop, as are the studded necklace and the pearls put on the ears, the design of which is, indeed, completely original. Originals also are the nicely horizontally striped background, the oblique sacrificial cord (never seen on genuine mohras) put on the right shoulder (as it occurs with fake Durgās of the same provenance), and the nicely made small hemispherical breasts so neatly encircled.



Fig. 406. *Viṣṇu on Garuḍa*. Brass, 25.5 cm. Allegedly Cistulej, ca 1400. Another specimen which might also be a fake has been published in Aryan's *Folk Bronzes of North-Western India*, No 48. But another similar faked version of *Viṣṇu* of which the genuine prototype is kept in the Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba (Fig. 256), is to be seen in Fig. 396 (Crafts Museum, New Delhi). See also Figs. 254 and 257, of which elements are here to be found. But again, we find here the usual additional small heaps of balls (offerings) on either side of the base, and the additional two male attendants. The discus of *Viṣṇu* is here in fact the umbrella-like lotus of Kullu that the faker often (see *Ganeśa*) has interpreted as a shield. The mace (a trident) should be longer and held downwards.

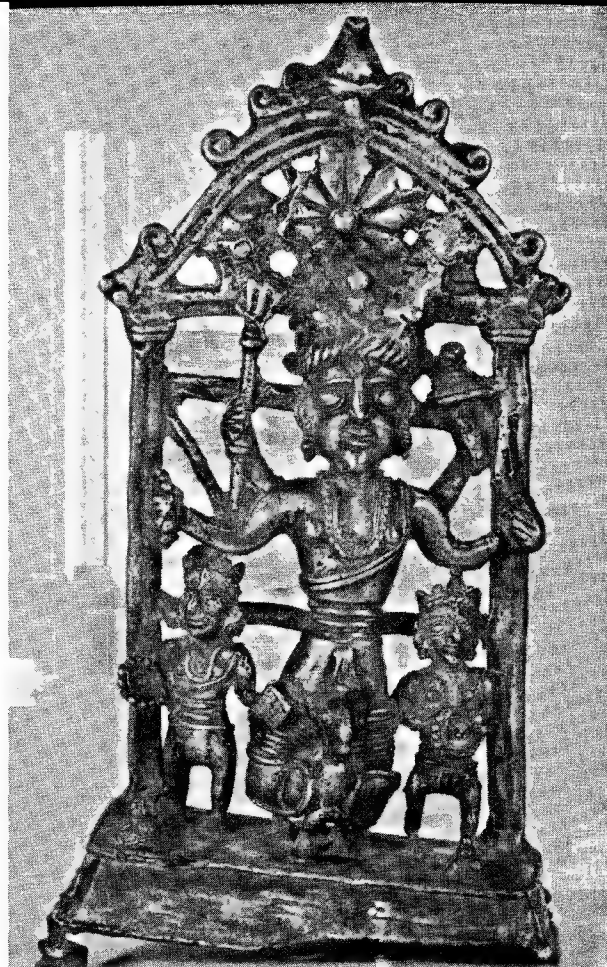


Fig. 407. *Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa*. Brass, 23 cm. Allegedly from Kullu, fourteenth century. Refer to the caption related to the same group (Fig. 240) and the similar one kept in situ in Sarsai, which is a later copy of a common prototype. We simply observe that:

- the attributes are systematically inversed and the design of the umbrella-shaped lotus appears also to be inversed as if a strong wind had turned it upward;
- *Garuḍa* is of a sixteenth century stylistic design and lacks the snake that should normally protrude from between his legs;
- the attendants are iconometrically definitely too big and in such a way that the faker had to enlarge the base in the rear part in order to include them; they should furthermore stand on a lotus; their fly-whisks are curiously designed;
- parts are unevenly worn and the way the figure of *Lakṣmī* is worn appears to be excessive and unnatural;
- the mandorla is disproportionate because of the height of the attendants;
- the mace of *Viṣṇu* should be held downwards, and is of a design uncommon for Kullu;
- the base is incontrovertibly copied after Mr. Jan Miog's specimen (Fig. 240) which seems to be earlier than the one of Sarsai.



## PART FOUR : INSCRIPTIONS



## INSCRIPTIONS

In Kullu and Chamba districts we come across a large number of inscriptions from the early centuries of the Christian era. These records are written on stone slabs (for example, the Salri rock inscription in Mandi), various records of the Chamba dynasty on fountain stones, on the pedestals of metal images (Bharmaur and Chhatradi), on metal *mohras* (hundreds of them in Kullu, Mandi and Simla districts), on wooden temples (the Hiḍimbā temple at Manali), and on copper-plates (the Nirmand copper-plate of the seventh century A.D.) and a few coins. Literary records are also written on paper manuscripts, but we are not concerned with these, at present.

As these records span a period of nearly two thousand years, they reveal all the stages through which the Brāhmī script or rather the northern and north-western varieties of the Brāhmī script developed.

The earliest documents are twelve copper coins of the Kulūta kings, Virayaśas and Vijayamitra of circa first-second century A.D. The script is early Brāhmī as it was known in northern India. After this there is a gap of some three centuries, the next historical documents being the Salri rock inscription and the Nirmand copper-plate; the former has not yet been published, while the Nirmand plate was edited by J. F. Fleet in the *Corpus Inscript-*

*tionum Indicarum*, Vol. III. Our next records are the well known inscriptions of Meruvarman, the king of Brahmapura, who has been dated on palaeographic consideration to around 700 A.D. These and other Chamba records have been edited by J. Ph. Vogel in *Antiquities of Chamba*, I. After a gap of two to three centuries, we start getting numerous written records of the Varman dynasty of Chamba. They are all written in the developed Śāradā script of north-western India, which emerged from the Brāhmī around 750 A.D. In Kullu, one important document is a brief record on the so-called Śujunīdevī metal bust, which is dated in the (Śāstra) year 2, to be read as 1026 A.D. Although the style of the image relates to Chamba, the script is full-fledged Nāgarī and not Śāradā, which raises interesting questions. While in Chamba we come across numerous inscriptions from the tenth-eleventh century onwards, in Kullu the period between eleventh and fourteenth centuries is a blank. From the fifteenth century onwards, we repeatedly come across records on stone and wooden temples, on metallic images and on *devatā* masks. These records are written in the late form of Śāradā. From the sixteenth century onwards this form of Śāradā gave way to the writing known as Devāṣeṣa or Ṭākṛī. The peculiarity of Ṭākṛī is that it was a script of semi-literate traders and villagers and the engraving was done by careless persons which makes it very difficult to read. Again, many

local varieties of the Ṭākṛī were in existence, in Chamba, in Mandi, in Kullu, etc.

In this section we shall consider the important record on the Nirmand mask of Śujunīdevī and several short records carved on the *mohras* of Himachal. We also include a note on the inscription on the base of a Śākyamuni bronze from Gilgit, in view of its intrinsic significance.

### The Inscriptions on the Devī Bust of Nirmand (Figs. 408-410)

As described elsewhere (pp. 251, 252 and Appendix A, which reproduces an old paper by H. L. Shuttleworth) an inscribed metal bust of a goddess is in the possession of the Paraśurāma temple in Nirmand. By fortuitous circumstance Shuttleworth obtained a single photograph of the bust when it was brought out for worship at the Bhunda or rope-sliding ceremony in 1919. The inscription engraved around its base was only partly visible in that photograph, but it was tentatively read by J. Ph. Vogel ("Note on the Nirmand Mask Inscriptions" *Acta Orientalia* 1923 pp. 230-237).


The bust of the goddess was stolen from the Nirmand *bhandar* in 1982 but luckily was recovered by the Kullu Police. We had the good fortune to examine the bust and study its inscription in November, 1982, with the co-operation of the Police. In the following we first describe the record, after which we reproduce Vogel's conjectural reading, then our own improved version.

There are as many as three inscriptions on the metal bust of the Devī from Nirmand: (i) the main donatory record around the base line of the bust; (ii) another record of seven *akṣaras*, which have been erased so thoroughly that only traces can be made out, and (iii) a later record of seven *akṣaras* in Ṭākṛī carved around the neck of the image.

### The main epigraph

#### The Script

The main inscription on the bust is written in the Nāgarī script of circa eleventh century. Where an *akṣara* has two verticals, a straight line runs across the tops of both, making the *akṣara* a close-topped one. The vertical stroke of the sign of medial *i* is elongated to full length, that is, it reaches the base line of the character which it modifies. The vertical

stroke of the medial *ā* (and *o*, *au*) is sometimes full length, but sometimes it is of half length. (Compare *āṣāḍha*, *bhaume*, *devyā*, *akaroditā*, with *āṣāḍha*, *rājye*.) In general, our writing shows an advance over the script of the ninth-tenth century. The *upadhmāṇīya*, that is the *visarga* aspirate as it is pronounced when it precedes *pa*, is represented by the sign  (*devyāḥpratimā*).

The characters of the epigraph are shapely. Curves, wedges and knots are handled artistically, so that although the record is brief (altogether some fifty *akṣaras*), it still makes a definite impression on the reader. The verticals are rarely straight, they incline from left to right, and at the bottom they form curves. The superscribed sign of medial *e* shows a flourish. The *daṇḍa*, the mark of punctuation, is not a straight vertical bar but is formed in two strokes with a knot in the middle—all this intended to create an elegant appearance.

#### The Metre

The inscription consists of a prose sentence followed by one single stanza in the *anuṣṭubh* or *śloka* metre of four parts, each of eight syllables.

The date line gives the date of the record as Tuesday, the tenth day in the dark half of the month of Āṣāḍha in Saṁvat 2, doubtless, the Laukika Saṁvat, also known as the Śāstra or Saptarṣi Saṁvat, which was used since ancient times in the north-west of India, and is still in use in Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. In this reckoning, the centuries are not expressed. The first year of every new century starts in 25 or 26 of a Christian century. Our record, therefore, must be dated in

$$2 + 25 \text{ or } 26 = \text{--}27 \text{ or } \text{--}28 \text{ A.D.}$$

The text of the record, according to Vogel:

Om Saṁvat 2 Āṣāḍha-vadi 10 bhaume  
Rāja-Hemaprakāśākhyāḥ prakāśita-nijaśriyāḥ  
priyā-śrī-Mujunī-devyāḥ pratimām akarod  
imām || ghaṭito Siddhapaneti

"In the year 2, on Tuesday, the tenth day of the dark fortnight of (the month) Āṣāḍha. The Raja, Hemaparakāśa by name, made this image of (his) beloved, the illustrious Queen Mujunī (or Muhunī?), by whom his own glory has been made manifest. (It was) fashioned by Siddhapa."



Vogel correctly assumed that the era in question was the Lokakāla or Saptarṣi era, the cyclical reckoning peculiar to the whole of north-west India, in which the hundreds are omitted. He suggested that the inscription referred to 826-827 or 926-927 A.D.; in this he was wrong, as we shall see.

Our reading based on an actual examination of the bust, is as follows:

As the week day, the lunar day (*tithi*), the fortnight (*pakṣa*), the month and the year are all recorded, it is possible to deduce the exact date in the Christian era, which is Tuesday, the 12th July 1026 A.D. (L. D. Swamikannu Pillai, *An Indian Ephemeris*, q.v.).

As pointed out in an earlier chapter, the Śujunīdevī bust closely resembles Chamba's



Fig. 408.

Om (/\*) Saṁvat 2 Āṣāḍha vadi 10 bhaume ||  
Rājñe(jye?) Hemaprakāśasya prakāśita-nija-  
śriyāḥ |  
śriyā(priyā?)-Śrī-Śuju(or Sujja)nīdevyāḥ  
pratimām=akarod=imām ||  
Ghaṭitā Siddhapaṇ=eti ||

"Tuesday, the tenth day of the dark half of Āṣāḍha, Saṁvat 2. During the reign of Hemaprakāśa, whose prosperity is manifest, his queen donated this (auspicious) image of Śrī Śujunīdevī. Made by Siddhapaṇ."

Gaurī-Śaṅkara image, also of circa 1025 A.D., in style (Fig. 168), and may have been cast there, although it is located in Nirmand. On the other hand, the script is not Śāradā as would be expected in the case of a product of Chamba, while the suffix prakāśa is met with at least once in Nirmand itself, in the name of Kuśalaprakāśa, the scribe of the Nirmand copper-plate of Samudrasena of the seventh century.

We may point out that political connections certainly existed between Chamba and Kullu in the

tenth century. King Somavarman in his copper-plate of circa 1055 A.D. mentions of his predecessor Sāhilavarman (circa 940 A.D.), that he was "asked the favour of his bestowing royalty in return for services by his kinsman, the Lord of Kulūta, anxious to pay him homage" (Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba*, I). Possibly the two houses of Chamba and Kullu were related by marriage.



Fig. 409.

The second epigraph on the Devī bust, of seven *akṣaras*, is engraved next to the concluding part of the first record. The characters were a little smaller when compared to those of the main record, but they have been deliberately rubbed out, so that we can barely make out *Śrī -- rīdevī* ||. The script is not much different from the main record, but, in its erased condition, not much more can be said.

The third record, around the neck of the goddess, also has seven *akṣaras*. The script is *Ṭākṛī*. The writing is shallow, when compared to that of the main record, and it dates to a much later period. The first three characters are partly disfigured by some scratches. A tentative reading -- *na (ta?) dīdītā* || "Given by -- (name of the donor)."

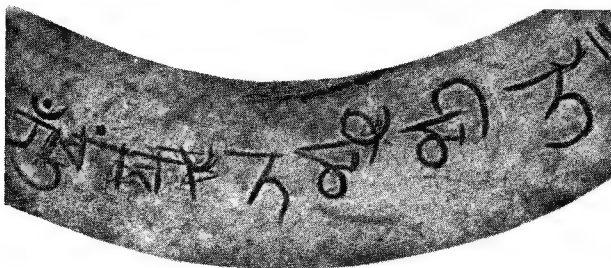


Fig. 410.

### The Inscription on a Śākyamuni Bronze

A bronze image of Śākyamuni (Fig. 103) in the collection of Mr. R. H. Ellsworth of New York

carries a donatory record. P. Pal published it in *The Bronzes of Kashmir*, Pl. 31, where he read the name of the king, though with a slight error. The bronze is not from Himachal Pradesh but from Gilgit, as argued elsewhere in our work, yet we include a note on its inscription in view of its intrinsic interest. We acknowledge our courtesy to Mr. Ellsworth, who supplied us with photographs of the bronze and consented to its publication.

The record is engraved on the front and the two sides of the image. It is in the *Śāradā* script of about the ninth century A.D.

(Left Side)

Svasti || Saṁvatsarenasate(?) 9 (?) Vaiśākha  
śudī 8 ||

(Front)

Mahārājādhirāja Parameśvara Paṭolaśāhi  
Śrī Āryanandivikramādityanandidevena  
deyadharmoyam pratiṣṭhāpitam(taḥ) ||  
Sava-antaṣpurikā-(*antahpurikā* ?) upala ||

(Right side)

Tathā sāva mahārājñī . . ī ||

(Translation)

"Benevolence! In the year 9 (?), on the eighth (*tithi*, lunar day) in the bright fortnight of (*the month of*) Vaiśākha, the king of kings, the supreme lord, the Śāhi king of Paṭola, Śrī Āryanandivikramādityanandi, ... as also the queen empress, --ī, installed this sacred dedication."

There is probably a mention of the king's inner apartments (*antahpura*). The name of the queen still remains to be read.

### The Ruler and his Dynasty

The inscription is of king Āryanandivikramādityanandi, of the Paṭola-Śāhi dynasty, who, together with his wife, donated the present bronze. The Paṭola-Śāhi dynasty ruled in Gilgit-Baltistan from the seventh-eighth century A.D. Three kings of this house are already known: Śāhānuṣāhi Paṭolaśāhi Śrī Navasurendrādityanandi, who is mentioned in an inscription from Hatun near Gilgit; he was probably ruling in 771 A.D., as we will see below. The same ruler and his queen Anaṅgadevī are named in the colophon of a *Mahāmāyūrī* manuscript which

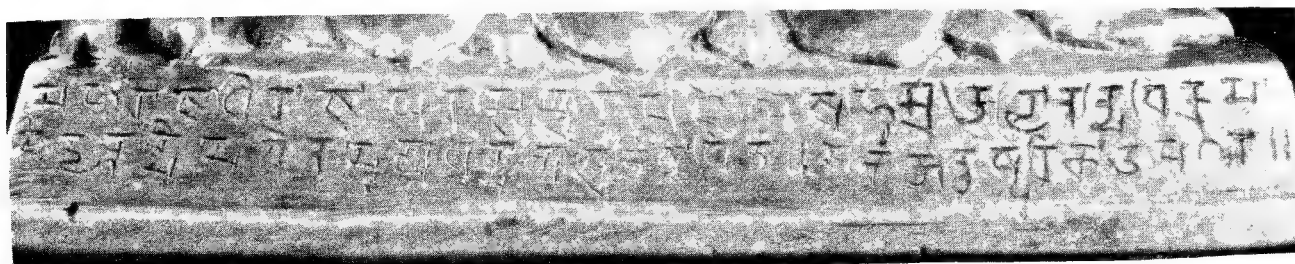


Fig. 411.

was found in a *stūpa* in the neighbourhood of Gilgit. A second king, Paṭola Śrīdeva Śāhi Surendra-vikramāditya Nanda, and his consort Śamidevī Trailokadevī Bhaṭṭārikā, are named in another Gilgit manuscript. A third king, Paṭoladeva Śāhi Vajrādityanandī, is known from yet another Gilgit manuscript.

### The Date

The present record is dated on the eighth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Vaiśākha, or April-May, in the year 9 (?). The unnamed era must be the Laukika or Saptarṣi era widely used in the entire north-western quarter of the Indian sub-continent since early times and until the present. The Laukika era is a cyclical reckoning, each fresh century beginning in the 24th year of successive Christian centuries. In practice, the hundred (and thousands) are omitted, only the years 1 to 100 being mentioned, after which the cycle starts afresh. Thus, by adding 24 (or 25) to a given date, one arrives at the corresponding year A.D., but

without the century. In the present case  $9+24 = 33$ . The Gautama Buddha bronze may be either 733, 833, 933 A.D. However, we believe that 833 may be the right date.

With respect to Pal's notes on Plate 31 of the *Bronzes of Kashmir*, we differ on three points:

- (1) That "no era is specified in the inscription". Indeed, the writer of the record felt *no need to name the Laukika era*, since it was of universal application in his country; many other records from the north-west, too, omit to name the era: for example, the Lokeśvara of Diddā's period also simply records its date as "the year 65" without specifying the era, yet the Laukika era has been understood, rightly of course, and  $65+24 = 89$ th year of an unknown century A.D. deduced; and, on the strength of Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅginī*, 989 A.D. works out as the exact date of that image.

However, Pal's decipherment of the numeral as 6 may well be true, and our own reading 9 is only provisional.

- (2) The record on the present bronze does not purport to say that king Āryanandivikramāditya was of an *Aryan* descent. If that was the writer's intention he would have composed that particular sentence as . . . Paṭola-śāhi āryaḥ Śrī Nandivikramāditya . . . and not Paṭolaśāhi Āryanandivikramāditya . . . Therefore, the correct or complete name of the king is Aryanandivikramādityanandi.
- (3) Pal was on the right track in suggesting that the ruler in question may have belonged to a Śāhi dynasty, but the all-important point is that the *country's name*, *Paṭola* or *Gilgit*, is also given in the record.

### Related Epigraphs

While we were studying the present record, a few other points about the other Paṭola kings named above, and their dates came up. The dynasty, probably in alliance with the Sassanids, displaced the Hephthalites in the sixth century, and ruled in Baltistan-Gilgit until the middle of the eighth century, when it is believed to have been overpowered by Lalitāditya Mukṭāpīḍa. The Hatun inscription of the time of Navasurendrādityanandi is dated in "the year 47". The editor of this record took this to be the king's 47th regnal year; but the epigraph also records full calendrical particulars such as the month, the fortnight etc., this would not be in order had the *regnal* year been intended. Doubtless, 47 must refer to the *Laukika* era, or  $24 + 47 = 71$ st year of an unknown Christian century.

Now it is interesting to note here that Navasurendrādityanandi of the Hatun and Gilgit records has been identified with king Sou-lin-t'o-i-tche of Great Pou-lu or Baltistan who, according to the Chinese histories, began to rule in 719 A.D. and who sent a mission to the T'ang court some time before 741 A.D.—Does it not appear, then, that the *Laukika* year 71 of the Hatun record may be 771 A.D.? If so, and if the identification of the Chinese and the Indian names is correct, then this king had a long reign of over fifty years, from 719 to about 771 A.D.

If Navasurendravikramāditya ruled till 771 A.D., and if Āryanandivikramādityanandi donated the bronze which we have been examining in 833 A.D., then it would seem that the Paṭola-Śāhi dynasty continued to rule even after Lalitāditya.

If our reading of the inscription is correct, then the bronze in the Ellsworth collection can be seen to have as much importance as the Sugatisandarśana Lokeśvara of Diddā's period. On the one hand, the Ellsworth image is earlier than the Lokeśvara by over a century, and can plausibly be dated to 833 A.D. (if not 733 A.D.), yet on the other hand, it can be precisely located in Gilgit, while all that we can say about the other is that it is from "Kashmir" in general.

Figs. 412 to 425 illustrate various Śāradā and Ṭākṛī records, most of which are fragmentary.

Fig. 412. A brief record in the Śāradā script on a silver mask (see Fig. 355). The mohra depicts a fierce aspect of Śiva, with bare fangs, rolling eyes, and with skulls in the matted hair. The mohra is datable to circa eleventh century A.D.

Viraṣaḥa

The characters are engraved forcefully and are quite clear; however, the last two akṣaras make no sense. One would expect a legend like Śrī Virabhadra, in keeping with the identity of the mohra.

The following inscriptions are in the Devāṣeṣa or Ṭākṛī script, a later cursive form of the Śāradā, which was current in Himachal in later periods. Ṭākṛī was the script of the semi-literate villagers; the orthography is careless, abbreviations are used often. Vogel characterized the Ṭākṛī as the despair of the epigraphists.





Fig. 413. Silver mohra of Viṣṇu of the time of Rājā Siddha Pāl of Jagatsukh-Kullu, Śaka 1422/1433-1500/1511 A.D. (see Fig. 362).

The record is engraved in the space defined by the necklace of the god, as well as outside, on what may be described as the chest plate. It is clear that the former is the main part of the epigraph. A considerable part of the record is hidden under the devotional flowers.

Śrī Śakakālaso  
1422

Śrī Sidhapāla lahula ku  
lu ... | Ākali ... 4

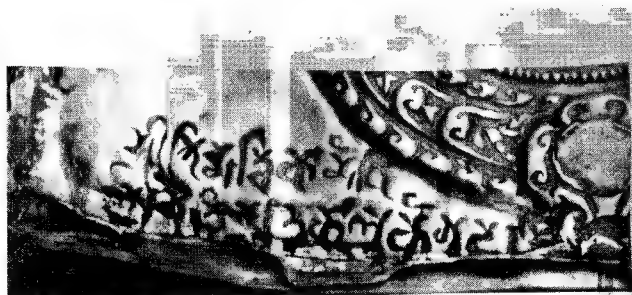
The priest of the temple informed us that another inscribed metal-plate is hidden under Viṣṇu's mohra, but this could not be examined.



Fig. 414. Inscription of six lines carved on the viewer's right side of the doorway, Hirmādevī temple, Manali.

Om ... . Śrī  
devī Hidemā .. sade Śrī ma-  
hāraja śrī Bahādar sīnghjī  
... raja ... saṁ ...  
Vima | Sara ... kejugata .. ka | Devī  
ra dehare ...

The inscription names Mahārāja Bahadur Singh, who was on the throne in the mid sixteenth century A.D.



Figs. 415 and 416. On a silver mohra (see Fig. 356).

Inscription on the left, about eleventh-twelfth century A.D.

Śrī Nirmarikadevi  
ma ... mu ta kaluke ... ya sa

Later inscription on the right

Śrī Nirma  
ṇḍi devī (?)

Dr. Mrs. S. Gokhale, of Deccan College, Pune, kindly read as follows:

Left

Śrī Nirmarika debbi  
... takanukoyadāna

Right

Śrī Ti (?)  
Śrī debi



Fig. 417. Inscription on a silver mohra (see Fig. 359).

Om  
 Śrī Nīmrakridevī tākhāma || Raṅkhemutaregha  
 ṭīṭā

*Dr. Mrs. Gokhale's reading:*

Śrī Timraśrīdebitāgāsa Raṅgesutaraghanitam . . .

Fig. 419. Inscription on the collar of Durga's mount lion, Mehla, Chamba district (see Fig. 148).

Śrī rājā Prthvīsimhakīdāsī Śrī Baṭlukī . . . rīa Badarīdās  
 takhajanū Govinda | Masubha

*The inscription records the name of Baṭlu, wet-nurse of king Prthvī Singh of Chamba (1642-1664) as also the king's own name.*

Fig. 418. Inscription on a silver mohra on a ratha seen at Kullu.

Śrī sarī	sanāratu
Cai 25 . . . madarā	se . . so
gha tuyā   Gurama	ragha saragala

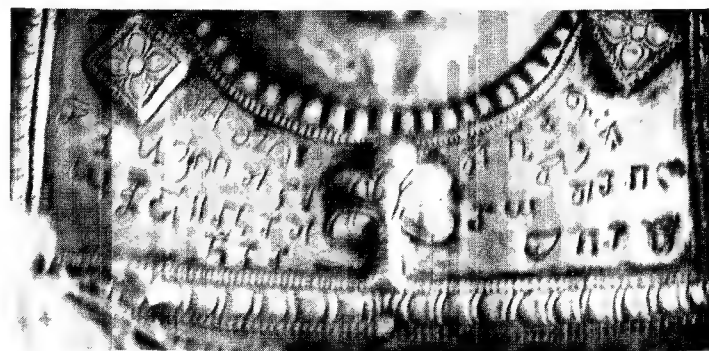




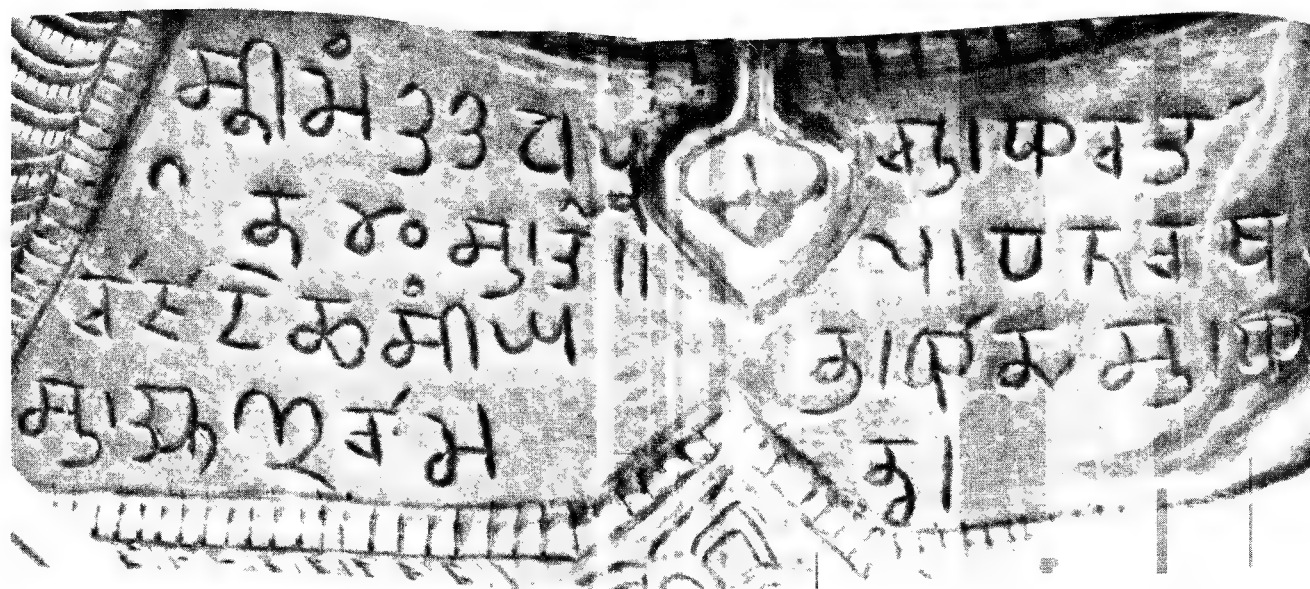
Fig. 420. Inscription on a silver mohra, Karjan, Kullu district  
(see Fig. 368).

Om Śrīmahārāja Mansingha	sya   Makha la sima
devasya Saṁ 70 va pra	la . . . kīra
. . de   Jī de	

Fig. 421. Inscription of Śāstra Saṁ 22 or 1746 A.D. on a silver  
mohra in the Ādi-Brahmā temple, Khokhan, Kullu  
(see Fig. 373).

Śrī saṁ 22 va 5	Ga   Karatā
na 40 su To	Pa   Dhanarakha
Rāja Techa Śingha	na   Kādasu   Kasuta
sya   Āṇurama	Ru

The inscription records the name of king Tēdhi or Tej Singh,  
ruler of Kullu, and Śāstra Saṁvat 22 = 1746 A.D.





Figs. 422 and 423. Inscriptions on two mohras, Karjan, Kullu  
(see Fig. 367).

- (a) Sam. 1717 mā pra 11 Devī Docā Muçā  
Kāradāra Khimadāsa
- (b) Sam. 1757 .. Kāradāra Khimadāsa  
... pra 10  
Rājā ... sīngha ... khā ..





Fig. 424. Inscription on the stone barsela of king Balbīr Sen of Mandi.

Śrī Saṁ  
Mahārājā Balabīra Sen

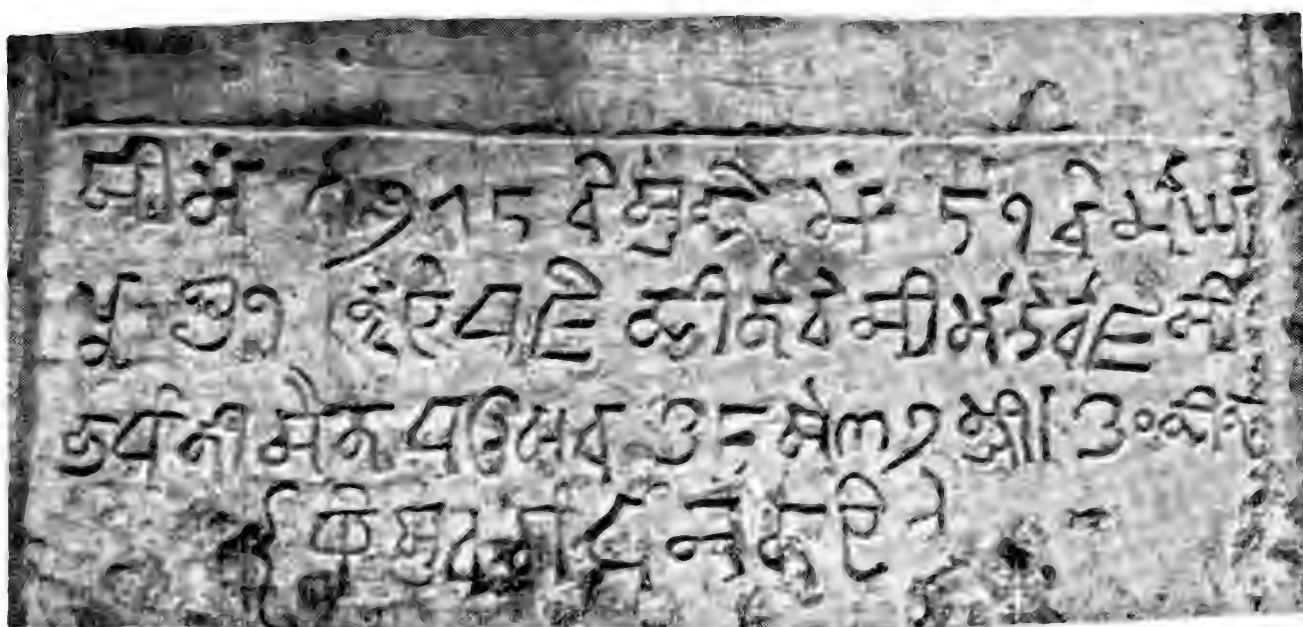


Fig. 425. Inscription on the barselas of king Bhavānī Sen of Mandi, who died in 1912 A.D.

This is the latest Tākri record on the barselas of the royal family of Mandi.

Śrī Saṁ 1968 re Saṁ 89 re Māgha  
pra 21 re vaje Śrī Mahārājā Śrī  
Bhavānī sain va umar 38 sāl 20 din  
ke suragavās hue



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## APPENDICES





## AN INSCRIBED METAL MASK DISCOVERED ON THE OCCASION OF THE BHUNDA CEREMONY AT NIRMAND

Paper read before the Dutch Oriental Society, April 21st 1922

By

*H. L. H. Shuttleworth, I.C.S.*

Nirmand, the Kasi of the Mountains, where in March 1919 I had the good fortune to see the inscribed astadhatu mask, the subject of this note, is a large hill village, eight miles to the north-west of Rampur in the Satluj valley beyond Simla. It is seldom visited by Europeans other than local officers. The name is, however, known to Sanskrit scholars from the copper-plate edited in Dr. Fleet's Gupta Inscriptions.<sup>1</sup> Captain A. F. P. Harcourt, Assistant Commissioner of Kulu, has given some interesting details of the twelve-yearly rope-sliding ceremony or Bhunda in his book on Kulu, Spiti and Lahul (1871), while Dr. A. H. Francke has described some of Nirmand's many striking religious edifices, of which Parasurama's and Devi Ambika's temples are in the pent roof style with walls of timber and loose stone, and the rest of the sikhara type of the North Indian plains.<sup>2</sup>

Prof. J. Ph. Vogel has most kindly dealt with the two inscriptions in Devanagari and Sarada from the rather inadequate copies and the photograph which I sent him, but some account of the circumstances attending the discovery of the bust is necessary to

explain the reason why this remarkable work of art has hitherto escaped the notice of both Indians and Europeans. Captain Harcourt, who arrived in Kulu in April 1869, did not himself see the Bhunda of 1868.<sup>3</sup> Probably my wife and I are the only Europeans, who have witnessed the ceremony and have been permitted to approach the mysterious cave within Parasurama's temple, whence the bust was brought.

North of the Satluj throughout the Kulu subdivision, save perhaps at Manikaran and Sultanpur, Brahmanistic influence is weak or non-existent. But Nirmand is an isolated and outlying Brahman stronghold, where Kanets and Kolis, though they are represented on the managing committee of the temples and are cultivators of the temple lands, count for little. The Brahmans who are divided into five gotras, each with its own temple, appear to be a colony from the plains. The Atharvaveda is their chief study, as the copper-plate inscription indicates. Their Mahatmya relates that Rama, the son of Jamadagni, settled the best of the twice-born (i.e., the Brahmans) in Nirmand in order to per-

1. *Corpus Inscr. Ind.* (Calcutta 1888), Vol. III, pp. 286 sqq.; Plate XLIV.

2. Capt. A.F.P. Harcourt, *The Himalayan Districts of Kooloo, Lahoul and Spiti* (London 1871), pp. 318 sqq.; A.H. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, Part I, Archl. Survey of India, New Imp. Series, Vol. XXXVIII (Calcutta 1914), pp. 4

sqq.; Plates Ib-III. Cf. also H.W. Emerson, 'The historical aspect of some Himalayan customs', *Journal Panjab Hist. Soc.*, Vol. VIII (1921), pp. 185 sqq.

3. Capt. Harcourt's account has been added as an appendix to Dr. Vogel's paper.

form a sacrifice every twelfth year for the worship of Devi Ambika. In early days this sacrifice involved the death of a man, as the traditional ritual, which has remained unchanged to our day, proves. However in recent times, since 1868, an animal has come to be substituted for the human offering. But, even prior to this last development, the sacrificers had ceased to demand that the human victim should inevitably die. In 1819 William Moorcroft met in Garhwal one Banchu, who had at Tiri on sixteen occasions taken the part of the victim without serious mishap, in a more frequently celebrated rope-sliding festival.<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was left to the deity to decline or to require the victim's life.

It is only for the occasion of this periodical sacrifice that the cave within Parasurama's temple is opened and his triple silver mask is brought out. In the interval the massive timber doors at the entrance are kept closed. In 1919 the jag (Skt. yajna) or sacrificial festival, took place in March nearly three years after the last twelve-yearly period had expired. Failures of the crops and successive epidemics caused this unusual postponement. The date of the festival is usually settled well in advance at the time of the Spring crop; Bhadon and Magsar<sup>5</sup> are the usual months during which the ceremony takes place.

The victim of the Beda caste — in 1919 it was one Gorla of Dalash — requires nearly six months to plait from bagri fibre the heavy rope, nearly 500 yards long, down which he used to slide over the precipice. Originally, no doubt, the Beda was just pushed over to a certain death. The next stage was that he was given a fair chance of escape by being allowed to descend seated on a hard wooden saddle down a rope supported at both ends by stout upright timber piles, the beam at the starting point being some 300 or 400 feet higher than that at the lower end of the slanting cable. Since 1856, when the rope broke and the Devi claimed her last human victim's life, a white goat has been substituted for the actual descent only. But even now all the old ritual is meticulously observed and Parasurama, the

Sacrificer, is still shown the Beda seated astride the rope. During the six months' preparation for the Bhunda the Beda victim is fed and clothed at the temple's expenses; he is no longer regarded as an ordinary low caste man; he becomes almost supernatural — something not quite of this world — and is closely identified with the Goddess, to whom he is destined to be devoted. In this we find some resemblance to the Aztec practice of medieval Mexico, as Sir James Frazer has observed in 'The Scapegoat'.

Parasurama has to witness the sacrifice in person. For this purpose his triple silver mask, with which the actual divine presence or personality is associated in Kulu fashion, is carried out of the cave by stripped Brahman, who with four others, Brahmans and Sonars, enters it in the presence of the Temple Committee. The great water vessel — the Kalasa — has also to be taken out by a second man for replenishment. The other three bring out of the cave any article which they may happen to touch in the gloom. And so it was that our inscribed mask by a happy chance saw the light of day in 1919. The Brahmans, Pujaris and Manager, who had never seen it before, considered it to be a human Rani's (Queen's) portrait; the man, who had carried it out, thought that a similar Raja's mask stood at its right side, but explained that he did not see it well in the gloom of the cavern.

Before describing the mask, it may be of interest to give an outline of the events that follow the carrying out of the Lord of Sacrifice's representation from its underground retreat:

1. On the first day at evening a procession of Pujaris and Brahman women visit in turn the five principal temples of Nirmand, commencing with that of Devi Ambika. This represents Parasurama's invitation to the deities to participate in the sacrifice.
2. On the next day visiting Devatas and Devis from other villages are received at Parasurama's temple; their masks, or emblems, are grouped in front of Parasurama's repre-

4. William Moorcroft and George Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan*, from 1819 to 1825. Prepared for the press by H.H. Wilson (London 1841), Vol. I, p. 17. Capt. Harcourt, *op.cit.*, p. 206, notes that the procedure practised at Nirmand is identical with that detailed by one of Major Montgomerie's pundits, who witnessed just such a reli-

gious exhibition at Potolah fort outside Lhasa, the headquarters of the Buddhist creed. Cf. J.Ph. Vogel, Triloknath, JASB, Vol. LXX, Part I (1902), pp. 3 sq. *Acta Orientalia* I.

5. Sanskrit Bhādrapada and Mārgaśīrṣa, the second month of the rainy season and the first month of winter respectively.

sentation in a first floor room or verandah above the cavern.

3. That afternoon or next day the Kalasa of Parasurama is conveyed to the Chandi Baoli, or spring, and solemnly refilled, while all the married Brahman women, whose husbands are alive, repeat a mantra in turn. This is called the Jal Pujan.
4. The Beda is taken into the courtyard of Parasurama's temple and, before a great head of Kali Mai, is formally dedicated to the Goddess and devoted to death. Water is sprinkled on him and he is clad in a corpse's shroud. Meanwhile hundreds of the temple tenants carry the long rope from the hut, where it has been plaited, up the hillside to a spot more than half a mile above the temple and affix it as tautly as possible to the upper and lower posts. Then the Beda in his shroud is carried out of the temple on the shoulders of, I believe, both Brahmans and Kanets and seated on the rope by the upper post. At this moment Parasurama's litter is taken to a small courtyard adjacent to the temple, whence the victim can be seen in the distance. Then, under cover of a blanket, a white goat is quickly substituted for the Beda and sent sliding down. When it reaches its destination, it is sacrificed and Parasurama is carried back to his upper floor.
5. After the visting gods have left, Parasurama's mask, his water vessel and all other objects, which may have been brought out, are replaced in the cave and the doors are bolted and locked for at least another twelve years.

There was so much of interest to observe at the festival, that it was not till the Bhunda was over and all our possessions, except an empty tent and a camera with only one unexposed plate, had been

sent on ahead, that the astadhatu bust was brought to my notice. It was at once obvious from the general style that this work of art dated from a time much earlier than any other known Kulu mask. It seemed to me to be, perhaps, a century or two later than some of the stone heads of the eighth century rock-hewn Masrur Temple in Lower Kangra.<sup>6</sup> It was far superior to, and in style quite different from the earliest hitherto known Kulu mask, that of Devi Hirma of Dhungri dated 1418 A.D. There is nothing in common between the Nirmand mask and the ordinary masks of Kulu Devatas<sup>7</sup> which are of thin beaten silver or gold or other metal. It is a heavy astadhatu casting, fifteen inches in height over all, representing a crowned female head and breasts. The face is six inches high; the weight must be about thirty pounds, though the back is hollow. A long single line Devanagari inscription runs along the edge below the breasts. The simple letters of it are about three sixteenth of an inch high. The letters of the short Sarada inscription on the chest under the neck, nearly three eighths of an inch high, were evidently added much later. They are much shallower than Devanagari letters.

The mask has every appearance of being an actual portrait, as it is extremely realistic and life-like. It conveys an air of dignified repose. The face is full and somewhat broad; the nose straight and finely modelled. The bust is well developed. Perhaps the subject, Rani Mujuni, wife of an unknown Raja Hemaparakasa, was then in her early middle age. The photograph gives a good idea of the nature of the ornaments, the jewelled three-pointed regal crown, the large circular earrings, the necklace and string of small round beads. It can safely be said that our mask is a fine example of the work of the ninth or tenth century A.D., a period of widespread artistic activity throughout North India, of which there are, however, no other known instances in these Outer Saraj hills.

6. H.L. Shuttleworth, 'Note on the Rock-hewn Vaishnava Temple at Masrur, Dera Tahsil, Kangra District, Panjab', *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XLIV (1916), pp. 1 sqq.

7. Hirananda, Historical documents of Kulu, *Annual Report, Archl. Survey of India, 1907-1908*, pp. 260 sqq, See in particular, Plate LXXXIV.

# RECORD OF A TOUR IN THE SUTLEJ VALLEY, SIMLA HILLS FROM 20 OCTOBER 1973 TILL 6 NOVEMBER, 1973 OR IN SOME UNKNOWN HIMALAYAN TEMPLES

By  
O. C. Sud, Simla

## I. The 'Lost' Temple of Mangnee

It was at the suggestion of Lady Betjeman (Penelope Chetwode), who had been making frequent trips into the Simla Hills and presently working on Pahari temples that I consented to accompany the little expedition she was bringing from England to discover the 'lost' temple of Mangnee, supposed to have been located at one time within a radius of ten miles from Narkanda (8880 feet above S.L.), 40 miles from Simla. This temple, very vividly described and ably sketched by James Bailie Fraser in his journal of the *Himala Mountains* in the year 1820 had caught the notice of the lady and she had checked up on all the available Survey of India maps on its location but without any success. The fault was neither hers nor of Survey of India people: it was all due to the erroneous reconstruction of the draughtsman who had been entrusted in reconstructing the itinerary of James Bailie Fraser after the publication of his journal in 1820. The map constructed by him clearly shows that the village of 'Mangnee', as spelled by Fraser, was to the North-west of Narkanda while that was not the case, and the village, locally called Manan, was very much due south-east of Narkanda towards the side of River Giri. The lady had been looking for 'Mangnee' in a wrong place where Fraser's draughtsman had put it, and so kept her off mark for a number of years.

We started from the Holiday Home about the noon of 29th October to Narkanda from where we had planned to scan the surrounding hills for the 'missing' temple. The lady persistently assured me that the temple might have been destroyed by fire or might have been razed to the ground in the severe earthquake of 1905 which shook these hills and did tremendous damage to life and property. I nearly gulped her assumption when I did locate on one of my Survey maps a place called Manan but with absolutely no indication of a temple which is always given on large scale maps in the form of

a symbol. We became quite sure that if Manan was Mangnee of Fraser, the temple must have succumbed to the vagaries of nature and lost forever.

We reached Narkanda about 3 p.m. and started making enquiries from the local residents about Mangnee. Several of them — the chowkidar (keeper) of Narkanda rest house, where we stayed for the night, emphatically confirmed that there was only one Mangnee and it was the Manan I had located on the map. Local people called it Mananee as well as Manan. The informers also told us that there was a large temple there but not of Bhowanee or Durga as mentioned by Fraser, but of the local god, a variant of Mahadeva (Siva) called Mananeshvara, literally 'The Presiding Deity of the Village Manan', which nearly upset us and made us lose all hope of ever finding the beautiful temple of Durga with its exquisite carvings which had received the admiration of a European traveller as far back as one and a half centuries. We did however decide to have a look for ourselves as I knew that the people of the hills often confuse temples of gods and goddesses pronouncing them as they liked.

After a hasty tea at the rest house we drove and proceeded toward Simla to a place called Shilaru, a distance of about ten miles from Narkanda from where the approach to Manan was a direct one. Shilaru is a collecting and grading centre for the potato grown in the villages down in the valley of Giri and one can see small mule-trains going up and down the hill bringing the cash crop to the Shilaru exit.

On reaching Shilaru we started our journey on foot downhill to the village of Manan and after a steep descent of nearly three miles we reached it. It was about 5 p.m. and a quick glimpse led us to see a lofty temple surrounded by a few shacks and mudhouses covered with coarse slaty roofs on



which was spread parched corn. But obviously comparing with Fraser's sketch of Mangnee temple we at once knew that this was not the temple we were looking for. However, we went into the paved courtyard of this building and were met by the officiating priest who on enquiry from us pointed out to the east to a small old chalet and we found that this was the one we were looking for. The golden rays of the setting sun were lighting the front entrance of the temple which curiously enough was on the west in complete contradistinction to the constructional peculiarities of Simla hill temples, the entrances of which are always to the east or south.

We approached the temple which was about 300 yards from the place where we presently stood. After comparing Fraser's sketch of 1820 with this chalet we found that there had been a very little change in the shape of the building and the surrounding human features. The pilgrim's hut, south of the temple in 1820s had now become a private farmhouse and in place of the three small chortens (shrines) close to it then only two remained, out of which the roof of the larger one had changed its shape from a round to a pyramid form. There was deep grass in the courtyard before the entrance and we had to cross this small stretch not without apprehending danger from lurking adders for which the priest had forewarned us.

We now looked for the carvings in wood and very soon looking into the interiors from the outside (as no one including the residents of the village was permitted into the inside of the temple proper not even the small open hall in front of the sanctum, except on the Hindu New Year day which is about the middle of April every year), we found a wild but delightful profusion of carvings based upon the life and episodes of Hindu gods and heroes.

It was a feast to our eyes to see splendid artmanship in such a little place hidden in the obscurity of remote mountain ranges. The carvings we saw were on the outside of the main room which housed the principal idol and the door of which was carved in deep relief bearing a fine representation of Durga in her common form of Mahisasuramardini and was shut. Some of the woodwork had been restored while the reliefs which, we were told, were old originals, had all received the treatment of the local painter's brush just about three years back, inscribed the 'Year of 1970' — the year of its overhaul. Each and every figure and design had been painted over by the painter after the painted marble sculptures of Jaipur (in Rajasthan). We were sorry for this monstrosity and indulging in vain regrets we retraced our steps to Shilaru and drove back to Narkanda. We decided to come over to our rediscovery and photograph it the next morning.

Next morning, i.e., on the 30th October, we again went down to Manan to take the intended photographs as well as to talk to the Kardar (temple manager) to collect any important detail that he may give us about the old chalet. We reached the temple quite early in the morning when the sun's first rays were just spreading their net over the locale. We took as many photographs as possible and waited for nearly a full day for the setting sun to light the whole temple from its front. We photographed nearly every bit of the sculptured panels, roofs, doors,

door-jambs, back, front, top and all. On the top of this chalet-type temple I located on its north side a freshly painted inscription in bold red Nagari letters which read 'Om namah Shivaya, Mananeshwaraya namah, 1970' obviously put up there soon after its renovation. The temple was renovated by the funds subscribed by the pilgrims from villages all around the ridges, as well as from the private treasury of the god Manan who, we were told, was very rich by himself, owning an agricultural estate of nearly 1200 *bighas* (220 square yards to a *bigha*). We were introduced to the village craftsmen, carpenters by heredity and profession, who took pride in telling us that the wooden sculptures in the old temples were the creations of their forefathers who traced their descent from *Vishvakarma*, the primeval architect-cum-craftsman of the Hindu pantheon. The village craftsmen were the two brothers who renovated the older temple and had built the larger newer one wholly by themselves not excluding the carvings thereon. The carvings were no doubt of quite good quality but not as good or fine as we saw in the older temple. The name of the two carpenters were Mani Ram, 32, and Mauji Ram, 28, the former being a limper who had fractured his ankle in an accidental fall. In reply to my pointed question about the designs they employed, Mani Ram offered to show me his pattern-book which guided his work. He sent his young son to fetch the book from his house which the latter brought and showed me. It was a treatise on design meant for carpenters published from Amritsar in the 1950s in Punjabi. Although badly lithographed, it was indeed an extremely useful book and went by the name of *Vishvakarma-darpan* written by Bhai Gyan Singh. It contained nearly all types of designs these carpenters had used in the decoration of their new temple woodwork. Mani Ram showed us some specimens of his work which consisted of two carved handcombs and an elegantly designed saw-handle, the latter of which I bought from him. The newer temple which is of the ordinary building type, two-storied and very much lofty is the creation of these two living brothers for which they deserve to be congratulated and appreciated. Hari Dass and Mast Ram, the two kardars (members of the temple committee) who showed us around, now gave us tea and under the auspices of the god Manan and after a nice little break which we badly needed we bade good-bye to Manan and came back to the Narkanda rest house where we arrived at about 8.30 p.m.

It will not be out of place to state here that in many of the older indigenous *Pahari* temples, I have often observed, the present structures have frequently been erected upon the sites where there once stood ancient classical temples of the northern Pratihara style dating back from ninth to twelfth centuries A.D. The relics of such temples consisting of old sculptures, peculiar types of bricks, some of them engraved in low relief, the *amalakas* or the umbrella-type stone tops of *sikhara*s and the *kudus* in the higher blocks are generally found lying close in the vicinity of the new *Pahari* wooden temples. One such fine example of rebuilding on the ruins of an old classical *sikhara*, is afforded to us by the old chalet of Manan which we had rediscovered. The relics in this case lie heaped up into a kind of small shrine just in front of the temple door, a few feet away. Besides the carved architectural pieces which are there, there are also some fine stone sculptures which attract the eye

of the visitor, most notable of which being an interesting figure of four-armed Visnu riding his birdmount Garuda. These remains, while comparing well in style and composition with the normal Pratihara remain of northern India, are still somewhat different from them, and it would not be incorrect to style them differently as Pahari Pratihara style. This slight deviation of the style may be accounted for by the fact that as soon as the craftsmen of the plains entered the hills with their patrons, who had been driven away due to insecure conditions prevalent in the plains, they had to adapt themselves to the hardy conditions of the hills and lack of proper building and working materials prevented them from keeping up the true Pratihara traditions. The Pahari Pratihara work shows a marked deterioration of temple architecture and sculpture which was later on completely replaced by a purely Pahari style of workmanship.

## II. The Kotesvara Mahadeva (Kumharsain)

After a sound sleep at the Narkanda rest house we got up early next morning (31st October) and after a hurried breakfast, at about 8 a.m. started in the direction of Rampur, the capital of the erstwhile hill-state of Bushahr, now merged in the territory of Himachal Pradesh like all the remaining 28 Simla Hill States. We drove for an hour or so on a very fine metalled road which winds in smooth curves through the deodar and pine-clad wooded forests of Narkanda. We covered a distance of nearly eight miles and passed by the palace of the former (now deposed) Raja of Kumharsain who, we were told, remained most of the time in Simla where he had property. A few hundred yards down from the palace we located a small hill-temple on a small ridge to our left, from its top like a parasol which outstood the adjacent topography, and parked our van just underneath it. We climbed the gentle incline leading to this temple and were already there within five minutes.

The northern part of the temple was brightly lit by the clear morning sun which gave it a good chiaroscuro effect. The old *pujari* of the temple who was about seventy years of age, was sitting outside the temple, reading his scriptures on a *tiala* (a kind of round raised stone plinth often built around the trunk of the sacred *peepul* tree), enjoying the cosy warmth of the sun's rays. He had come here to offer the morning worship to Mahadeva, whose temple it was. The old *pujari*, seated huddled and completely absorbed in his texts, under a giant aged ficus tree in the complete seclusion of mountain ranges, looked like a midget in the mighty pervasiveness of nature and did not fail to remind me of the place of man in the Zen Buddhist landscape paintings. I bowed to this holy man who wore thick glasses, and made him an offering of a Rupee, which he gladly accepted, conferring on me in reciprocation a 'God bless you' along with an apple he had on his book. He did not talk to me further and soon got drowned into the nectar of his holy books as a bee into a flower.

We now photographed the temple, the body of which was displaying a good play of light and shade. The interior of the temple was poorly lit and did not have many carvings on its wooden verandah pillars and the door of the sanctum, which we photographed for our record. The doorway of the sanctum

was loose and open and we could see the image of Lord Siva in his usual symbolic form of a *lingam* made of sandstone, about twelve inches high, coupled with a *yoni* (female sex symbol) which had been bathed recently with milk-water by the old *pujari*. The female symbol in such *tantric* (esoteric) Hindu compositions, which signify the supreme creative activity, is commonly called in the hills a *jalabri* or 'the recipient of the holy water', and normally receives and carries milk-water poured over the *lingam* and drops it on to a fixed spot in the *terra firma*. Very few human-shaped idols of Siva or Mahadeva are made and the temples devoted to Siva nearly always have the *lingam-yoni* symbols for everyday worship. Each and every temple of Mahadeva or Siva bears a different name according to the name of the place from where the *lingam* was brought and installed.

In this case the old *pujari* was not very helpful in telling us the name of the Mahadeva whose temple it was; and to find out his particulars the only way was to walk over to the nearest village which was about a quarter of a mile away, on a much higher land. I walked on to the village which was called Mandoli and knocked on a heavy wooden door of an old fort-like building just at the entrance of the village. My knock was answered by a young man who happened to be a relation of the old *pujari* we had met by the temple. While he could not tell me about the real age of the temple we had seen, he showed me around inside the house which was now used as the *bhandar* of the temple we saw. The interior of the house gave a peculiar dreary look; the only vent for the sun-light to reach in was in the middle of the ceiling and the apartment did not much look different from some kind of prison, which, as I was told later, it was, in the good olden times. Quickly glancing around the house, I found a few domestic utensils made of black copper, probably of local origin, which bore Nagari inscriptions on them, but no date. These utensils belonged to the temple and the name of the owner mentioned on some of them was Kotesvar Mahadeva. The other fittings in this house consisted of large wooden boxes (6' x 6' x 4') which were used as stores for storing grain and other household items of daily use. One of them was also used as a repository for hand-written books and documents during the state times.

After collecting this bit of information we left Mandoli and its presiding god, Kotesvar, and at about 11 a.m. under the blazing Himalayan sun proceeded towards Rampur where we were to buy some petrol and rations. It was about 1 p.m. when we reached Rampur and soon afterwards a constable approached us and took us to the Police Station where my British friends had to complete certain formalities with a scrutiny of their passports. When we told the Police Officer that we had no intentions to proceed further on the Hindustan-Tibet Road, for which a permit is required for every foreigner beyond Rampur, he left us away without further questioning. We started back — the same road we came — towards Datt Nagar, a small village, 10 miles from Rampur where we were to cross the Sutlej to the other bank on a newly constructed concrete bridge, on way to Nirmand. The Hindustan-Tibet Road, from Simla to Rampur and then on Shipki, which is the last Indian outpost, is metalled throughout and from Kumharsain to Rampur winds through the river terraces left by the

River Sutlej. Similar terraces are also seen on the other bank of the river which is rather undeveloped as yet and the motor roads on them are still unmetalled. We crossed over the Sutlej and took to the *katcha* road; and we raised enough dust to cover the distance of eight miles to reach Nirmand, the town of numerous private temples of Brahmins. It was about 5 p.m. and the sun was just about to set. In the hills the phenomena of an early sunset and a late sunrise is a common feature which is due to the presence of high mountains on all sides obstructing the light of the sun when near the horizon.

### III. Nirmand

We preferred to stay in the higher P.W.D. rest house, as the road of the lower Civil one was not in good repair for the van to approach. In whatever few minutes we had before the nightfall, we made a quick survey of the town from the rest house, and Lady Betjeman who had made earlier planned visits to this town quickly made out a plan for us for the next morning, a kind of a circular tour which would save us both our time and legs.

The town of Nirmand is situated at a height of 4900 feet above sea level, nearly 2000 feet above the Sutlej bridge we crossed at Datt Nagar. The town consists of about 150 houses of common peasant architecture with a permanent population of about 2000 persons, mainly landowning and agriculturists, cultivating their small strips of not a very fertile land but a rather sandy tract left over by the River Sutlej. The natural growth about the town is bush and scrub with a common variety of cactus which lines the roadside and covers the hill slopes. The cultivated strips are by the side of natural resources of water which are not many because of the porous beds of rock, and are thus only located near the low valleys or semi-perennial *nallahs* locally known as *gad* or *khad*.

Early next morning as we finished our breakfast we started on the pre-planned round of the town and its temples. The first thing that struck me about the town was a relative absence of any type of classical buildings like *sikhara* temples which I hoped to see in a place like this which was widely known for its remote antiquity. Until one was told one could hardly know a house from a temple — they were all alike: looking like huts and shacks, made of mud walls and covered with coarse slaty roofs. The only remnants to prove the antiquity of the place, as we saw later, were numerous Pratihara stone carvings scattered unevenly about the town. The principal repository of such relics turned out to be a shed which had received the designation of P.W.D. temple. The P.W.D. people, while making a road by the town came across some life-size statues of Hindu divinities which they housed in a shack by the roadside, considering them sacred, which came to be popularly known as the P.W.D. temple. These figures, though badly rubbed and disfigured, are enough indication about the famous Pratihara culture which must have dominated this place like the whole plains of northern India between the eighth and twelfth centuries. In these hills the style of such sculptural remains clearly reveals a blend of Gupta, Post-Gupta, Kashmir and Pratihara type of workmanship as we find in the only rock-cut temple in northern India, the Masrur Temple in the Himachal Pradesh. Other antiquities of this very period were in the figural re-

mains which we later saw near the fountain, the Thakurdwara Temple, Parsurama temple and the temple of Deccani or Dak-sesvara Mahadeva. Even at present there are still many temples in the style of peasant-type houses, owned privately by many Brahmin families; and out of these only two or three are used by the residents at large for their daily and routine worship. The latter ones also happen to be the most important temples of the town.

We started our chore with the morning worship of Ambika at her temple just below the bazar. Mr. Sharma, the son of the headman, was kind enough to guide us about the place. Supposed to be of very remote antiquity, the building of the temple had been restored, renovated and probably completely altered from its original shape. The beautiful black marble idol was probably imported from Jaipur or Benares and was adorned with rich gold ornaments. The silver, brass and copper pots and finials used in the course of worship, along with the little umbrellas made of gold and silver hanging over the idol, we were told, were all made locally. The 8 a.m. *aarti* over, we partook the *prasad* and departed. This temple, the most popular one, covers an area of nearly 40 yards square of landscape inclusive of its other smaller units like a small hut for the visitors and an apartment to house the musical instruments, utensils and other paraphernalia of the goddess. Lambs are offered to the goddess on festive occasions and meat shared by all present.

After a circumambulation of Ambika we moved eastwards to the shrine of the Deccani Mahadeva i.e. (Mahadeva or) *lingam* brought over from Deccan in South India. It took us just about five minutes to reach there. This was again a house-type temple and was in bad repairs. Layers of dust had accumulated in its interiors over centuries and they covered every bit of its interior except the main sanctum containing the *lingam*, the door of which was dislodged from its hinges. The dust which had hardened into thick stone-hard clay would not come off with even a Rodgers knife I had in my pocket and with which I tried to scratch it. Only the outline of the wooden doorframe and pillar carvings could be just deciphered and the fine quality of the original carvings could only be very well gauged. In a corner of the outer room we found a large stone idol about two and a half feet high, which was hopelessly disfigured but must have been a prize centuries back. A scrutiny of the figure revealed it as the figure of Kubera, the protector god of wealth, worship of whom was quite popular until the twelfth century A.D. all over northern India and is now confined only to the Buddhist periphery of northern India. The figure appeared to be seated on a *padma* (lotus) with his pot-belly still eminent. On one of the wooden doorway pillars it was also interesting to find a beautiful miniature replica of the famous nymph of Konarka (temple of the sun in Central India), known as Lady with a Mirror amidst other bas relief of scrolls and figures.

After taking leave of the Deccani Mahadeva a two-minute walk uphill brought us first to a fountain, the only source of (spring) water to the bazar area where we found a few unimportant stone reliefs and then to the famed Thakurdwara ('House of God') which was a small hut-like temple but

housed one of the most beautiful true Pratihara stone sculpture one could ever hope to see in a life time. It looked as if it was made of some blackish type of stone, most beautiful and intricate and was really 'alive' with life humming in it. It was an exquisite piece about 4 feet by 3 feet with the principal central figures of Visnu and his consort. Although much frequented by local people this house of god is ill-kept. The entire area in which this temple was, was not over 150 square feet. It was now time for lunch, about 1.30 p.m., and we started towards the most famous temple of Nirmand, the temple of Lord Parasurama or Rama with an axe whom human sacrifices were offered before 1900 in a ritual called Bhunda. This temple is located on the west end of the small bazar; and we crossed the whole bazar without finding a tea or food shop. It was just at the entrance of the temple of Parasurama that we found some people gossiping in a type of shack from where wood smoke was rising which later turned out to be a popular eating shop of the town. There was a round stone plinth in front of the shack before the gate of the temple on which we found some elephant and *makara* sculptures carved in bas relief. This plinth is meant for seating tired and fatigued pilgrims who come from long distances to pay homage to Parasurama on fairs held in his honour. We photographed the few carvings that were there and before seeing the principal temple we thought it better to fill our bellies with whatever was available in the eating shop. As we sat down to take our mid-day meal I noticed an interesting unique carving on the outer wall of the Parasurama temple. On this masonry wall which the shackman had used as a part of his enclosure, a relief there were two similar ones showed a human head on a base being worshipped by the devotees. The head was neither *lingam* as one would have supposed nor the head of another deity; and a little bit of mental reasoning made the things apparently clear. It was the head of a man and it is very much likely that the worship of human head had been the primeval form of worship originally prevalent in this area which had earned the name of the place as Narmund or Nrimund, both being Sanskrit terms meaning 'Man's Head'. I tried to take its photo but failed because of the dimness of relief. I do not think that this important relief is either known to the local people or even visitors who are always in a hurry to see everything in a day. The name Nrimund appears on a copper plate grant issued to the temple of Parasurama by Raja Samudra Sen, dated about twelfth century. After looking at and examining this bit of archaeological find we ordered meals which we enjoyed very much. Fine rice, dal and potato dishes with native chutney proved extremely satisfying.

We now entered the door of the temple and went inside a small alley which was not well-lit and here we found a standing stone guardian figure guarding the temple. The temple was not open and like most of the indigenous Pahari temples could not be opened unless all the managers (*kardars*) assembled together — which occasions are only festivals and fairs — and decided to open it upon special request. The *kardars* live in their villages a long way away from the town itself and have to be specially summoned well in advance. The only parts of the temple, therefore we could see were the three doors of the three joint apartments to the west and one door in front and a little covered hut opposite the principal door where the prin-

cipal idol is brought out and seated for public view on fairs and festivals. The doors operate with a heavy chain system like the draw-bridges of castles, the chains operating from the overhead windowlets. All these doors have carvings of scroll and foliage and on two of them we saw the images of Ganesa made of brass in usual Pahari style, stuck at the top. The doors were hardly 4 feet high as is common in Himalayan peasant houses. The entire compound of this temple would be not over 50 feet square. The open air wooden hut of the God was about 9' x 9' and about 10 feet high; the pillars and beautiful Pahari engravings of legendary Hindu gods with their own peculiar adaptations and with the usual sweet primitive cut about them. We were sorry that nothing else we could see in this temple, much as we wished to see especially the interior.

#### IV. The Limestone Cave

That was all we could see in the town proper and we were just beginning to retrace to our Rest House the headman Mr. Sharma's son took us along to his house and there gave us a very sumptuous tea. After the sip we were advised by Lady Betjeman to take a trip to the Dhankia Mahadeva, a natural cave temple, about 5 miles down on the motor road to Rampur. Mr. Sharma's son guided us to the place. Lady Betjeman did not go as she had been there in one of her earlier trips to the place and she had to write down her notes of the past two days' journey. We started to the spot in our van and were there in about 10 minutes. From the motor road we were to make a descent to our right along the *dhank* or steep cliff to the lingam cave which was about one kilometer from here. The location of this natural temple on the *dhank* earned it the pronomen of Dhankia Mahadeva. We picked our steps precariously going down the face of this nearly vertical cliff and for me, being tall, it was nearly impossible to keep my balance. It was after a good deal of difficulty that we did finally make it in about half an hour. On reaching the cave we found a small houselet built by the local resident for a *sanyasi* who performs *puja* in the cave. The cave had two openings and we entered through the one on the west which was the natural entrance to it; the other opening was on the south and acted only as a windowlet overlooking the River Sutlej and a small model village on its nearer bank. The cave is an infiltrated limestone cavern and quite normal to the limestone topographical features had in it a collection of stalactites and stalagmites, formed by the still dripping water. On one of these as we were entering barefoot I cut my foot which bled for a while. On the farther end of the cavern our apartment which was about 18 feet by 18 feet and almost as high we saw the drooping phallus-like formation of a *lingam*, before which the *sanyasi* had set up his rug for prayer with the ritual implements like a hand-bell, a conch-shell, a round slab of stone for making sandal paste and so on, under a canopy of frilled red cloth. The *sanyasi* was away and did not turn up in our presence. After sipping a little of the dripping lime water, the only source of water supply available here, we restarted our climb up reaching the motor road in about 45 minutes. It was now about 5 p.m. and was getting dark and we came back to the bazar, where we rested a while, finished our evening meal at the same shack and came back to the rest house. It was now nearly nightfall and after a cup of coffee we retired for the night. In the room where I slept I was awakened in the mid of the night by loud humming sound as that of an



airplane. I switched on the light and found that there was a big field bee-hive just under the wooden planks on the floor of the room and a number of bees was as if planning to come out from a big crack in them. I found a doormat handy and covered it up which silenced the winged desperadoes and lulled them to sleep.

Early next morning we got ready to descend down to the Sutlej bridge but before doing so had a quick look at the old temple very close to the rest house which looked like an imitation of a *sikhara* temple and where a blind *pujari* was performing the morning *puja* by the side of the large stone *lingam*.

### V. Datt Nagar

It took us nearly an hour to drive down to the Sutlej bridge and soon were on the main Hindustan-Tibet Road near Datt Nagar, where we alighted and had a heavy breakfast. On inquiring we found that there was an important temple in this place unknown to many people who pass frequently this way. The temple here is a house-type temple again with a number of hutments, where the *pujari* and other persons live, and a large *bhandar* attached to it. The *pujari* was fussy to let us in as he insisted that we must undo the clothes we wore and put on a white sheet to cover our body. We had to oblige him and entered the abode of the god which consisted of an outer and inner room, both poorly lit. The inner room which housed the standing life-size idols of Dattatreya, made of bronze and of the rarest kind of workmanship was accessible only to the officiating priest and no one was allowed inside. The only way to have a *darshan* of the rare divinity was through a small windowlet joining the two rooms and despite our best efforts we could not photograph the group. The set of bronze figures which happens to be in this temple is completely different from the common representation of Dattatreya in Hindu pictures and idols. The common form of depiction of Dattatreya is a three-faced figure, accompanied by a dog but here we have three separate standing figures (although it might mean the same thing finally). Dattatreya, in Hindu legends, was the son of the sage Atri and Anasuya. He was a Brahmin saint in whom a portion of Brahma, Visnu and Siva was incarnate. He had three sons Soma, Datta and Durvasas, to whom also a portion of the divine essence was transmitted. He was the patron of the warrior Kartavirya whom he gave a thousand arms. The name of the place ensues from the presence of the temple of this divinity.

To me, archaeologically, this site, on a terrace close to the River Sutlej, appears to be very important for the reasons that the present house-type temple has been built on the site of a very old one and the type of black bronze figures are simple in execution and unique; and above all, the field adjacent to the temple had on our visit yielded while digging up the land, a number of enormous-sized ochre-red baked bricks about  $2' \times 2' \times 6$  inches high. I believe this find is very important and no wonder some important relics of civilisation would be unearthed here sooner or later.

About four miles from Datt Nagar we first came to a very small village on the motor road itself, by the name of Nirth.

This place is well-known and nearly every guide written about Simla and the hills around mentions it as having a Sun Temple reputed to be over 800 years old. This is not wholly true. The modern temple is not so old but has been built over the site which did have a *sikhara* type temple of about twelfth century A.D. The present construction on the same pattern as *sikhara* is not more than two to three hundred years old; but some of the carved bricks and stone sculptures of the older temple have been reused definitely in places or parts of the present building. Some of the ancient stone sculptures are also embedded in the western masonry wall to the west of the shrine, as one can see. The temple is still very well preserved, the *sikhara* reaching to a height of about 30 feet. The only classical pieces of stone sculpture were the three or four much-rubbed idols of four-armed Visnu and his consort Lakshmi, seated on Garuda, their bird-mount, all about two feet high lying just near the door of the sanctum and an excellent buff red sandstone Ganapati which was kept in a small grove in the western wall of the temple. The idol inside the temple is a plaque-type of *Mohra* ('bust') impressed out of pure goldsheet. Here again to have a *darshan* (glimpse) of the divinity one has to do away with the usual clothes one wears and has to don a white sheet to cover the body. After spending about half an hour here we proceeded towards the Luri Bridge.

We left Datt Nagar at about 10.00 a.m. to the place called Luri where a bridge on the Sutlej connects the road to Kullu. Before reaching Luri is a small village called Kingal where we obtained some local fruit — hardy apple and pears — for the way, in addition to a load of *khattas* which attracted Lady Betjeman as outsized lemons she had never seen earlier. She took the juice of one such full lemon with her early morning cup of tea, telling us emphatically that this was best natural cure for rheumatism and the crippling disease called arthritis. After crossing the Luri Bridge before proceeding on the Kullu road, we took the van over the unmetalled road towards our right, which after about a distance of three miles took us to a strange looking temple across a field of bush and shrub. The place was known as Kheksu. The only person we met there was a chowkidar who regretted his inability to open the door of the shrine as it was locked and the key of the lock happened to be with the head *kardar* who lived four miles higher up in a different village. We told him that we hope to come back after three days when again we would call in and would like to have the *darshan* of the Devi. He assured us that as there was a small fair which is held at the Luri Bridge on that day and the temple would be open. We would be in luck to have *darshan* if we did come on that day. So, after bidding him good-bye we again came back to the Luri Bridge and followed the Kullu road which is not metalled yet but is quite safe for a drive. Luri, on the Sutlej, is a tiny village with two or three shops, a rest-house and some village houses. The road, which goes to Kheksu is a part, we were told, of another approach road to Nirmand, connecting a completely different set of villages.

### VI. Behena

We had just driven about two miles up the road to Kullu, when suddenly one of the tyres of the van got punctured. While David and Robin got busy on the job to repair it, the lady made some coffee which helped us all to break the monotony

of half an hour we had to wait. It was now about 1.00 p.m. and we got started again. After a distance of about four miles we came to the fairly large village of Behena with its beautiful large temple, which with its big building and porch occupied an area of about thirty yards square. The sanctum of the temple was three storied and the topmost roof top was about 45 feet high. Nearly the whole village and its urchins assembled to see us, strangers as we were, and also to find out as to why we were so mad to photograph the temple in detail. David and the lady climbed up the successive stories of the sanctum to find out the technical architectural details and measurements; and we photographed nearly every bit of its interesting carvings. The only impressive feature about this temple that I perceived was that it had the shape of a large gondola (covered houseboat). The incline or slant given to the base woodwork by the artisan made it look like that. The carvings on the doorway of the sanctum sanctorum and on the pillars and balconies around it were so beautiful, intricate and profuse that it took us several hours to see closely all the minor details. Amidst all the carved figure work of nearly all important gods and goddesses, birds and foliage, the most important thing to catch my attention was the carving of a figure of eleven-headed Ravana, the most despised demon-king of Lanka (Ceylon) who abducted Rama's wife Sita and was finally overpowered by him. This personage was curiously given an eminent place among the host of favourite Hindu gods and heroes, and possibly the reason behind it was that though Ravana was a great demon he was a great *yogi* too and through his penance, devotion and knowledge had won over Brahma and Lord Siva.

By far this was the best and most profusely carved temple, we had seen so far. I suppose that according to the legends and abstractions on the door of its sanctum, the temple must be a temple of the Sun. We could not have *darshan* of the presiding god as the key was again with the chief manager whom it was impossible to contact as he lived across the river which takes a turn here eastwards in a giant sweeping meander. It was now about 4.00 p.m. and before the sundown we wished to make to Ani to spend the night in the resthouse.

## VII. Ani

It was getting dark when we reached Ani and the first thing we did was to arrange an accommodation in the rest house. The *chowkidar* of the rest house put us under a deep obligation by giving us a room, telling us that we were being specially favoured by him despite the fact, which was untrue, that the whole rest house was booked for a medical party coming over from Simla. They never did. As we parked the van in the porch of the rest house we found another tyre punctured. A truck driver's cleaner offered to repair it and he quickly finished his job early next morning. Ani had been the capital of Kullu for some time and the last Raja Raghubir Singh had his palace there. His two Ranis still live there but being in *pardah* do not meet people at large. They have a secretary who does all their work and manages the entire estate. The last Raja built a fine playground and school at Ani; and I was told that the Moravian mission has a free hospital for the poor villagers. The town has about fifty flourishing shops, a police station and all the amenities like tap water and electricity. The eating shops are as yet primitive and serve locally grown rice, dal and bannocks of

maize and wheat flour. We could not meet many people as our stay here was only overnight.

## VIII. Shamsheer Mahadeva

Early next morning we pushed on at 8.00 a.m. and in a few minutes were at a very famous temple called Shamsheer Mahadeva, only about three miles distant from Ani, on an elevated ridge to the right of the motor road. We stopped here and spent at least two hours looking at the curious buildings and numerous other establishments belonging to the apparently very rich god Mahadeva. In the hills there are estates, grazing grounds, cultivated fields that belong to the gods of the principal temples; the god acting through the priest, all the produce, cash and property in fact sustain the priest's family and belong to him. The temple and the *bhandars* — it has two storehouses — occupy a space of about 100 yards square in addition to several acres of cultivated lands scattered over numerous villages. A little girl informed me that the priest lived nearby and could unlock the door of the god for our *darshan*. The priest was kind enough to come and open the door of Mahadeva for us. The principal image inside, we found was a flat stone slab about two feet high carved in Pahari style depicting Siva and his consort Parvati squatting on a bull; other fragments inside were three other carved stone steles, a brass bell with a beautiful temple-like top, a bronze seated Buddha about six inches high and a Himalayan primitive brass figure of Mahisasuramardini, also of the same height. The sanctum was hardly about six feet by six feet. The carvings of the wooden door were good but not profuse like Behena we saw the other day. A beautiful Varaha figure on the right was a masterpiece of Pahari craftsmanship; foliage, scroll and flower were really marvellous. Going around the temple, right at the entrance to the seating place before the shrine — I would not call it a hall — I located an inscription in Takri character engraved on one of the wooden planks of the ceiling, which I photographed but have not been able to decipher yet. It, however, appears to be a donor inscription giving also a date. The inscription is in six lines and covers an area of about three feet by two feet. In another place I found a stone *alto relievo*, two feet by one foot of a three-faced, four armed, bearded figure of a divinity riding a bird, most probably a Brahma, if it is supposed to be four faced, the last face hidden by the front three. The emblems of a sword and a mace in two hands could also make it the figure of Kartikeya, the warrior-god, if we suppose that the artist could not show the other three faces in the little space in which he worked the idol. A cross-legged devotee with the hands folded in devotion is seated underneath the figure. In indigenous Pahari temples it is futile to ask about the antiquity of the places of worship. The usual pet answer is given is 'Thousands of years'. Unless one examines a copper plate or parchment grant issued and stamped by the reigning king, oral guesses are completely unreliable. I am sure, in this case, the inscription photographed by me will surely yield a good answer about the date of the temple. We took leave of Shamsheer Mahadeva and started our journey to Khanag about nine miles from here. The road which winds in a gentle incline throughout follows the left bank of the perennial Ani Khad, which rises near the Jalori-Rohtang Pass, just about four miles from Khanag. The deep gorge of Ani river presents a terrific sight while you are travelling up in a motor. Monkeys frequent its valley, water

mills are a common sight and the greatest utilisation of this stream is for floating timber which is collected at the collection centre at its mouth near Behena where it joins the River Sutlej.

### IX. Khanag

We reached Khanag at about 4.00 p.m. and got lodged in the rest house which was quite empty. The old *chowkidar* was a nice man and assured us the evening meal if we provided the rations which we did from the only shop about half a mile up from the rest house. The headmaster of the local primary school, who hailed from Baijnath in Kangra gave us a quick cup of tea. Before the setting of the sun the only small trek we could do was to see the small shrine on a near hill-top to our east, the only abode of the only (unknown) but probably a 'Nag' or snake *devata* of the village Khanag. In an hour we were back again to the rest house making a circuit via the sheep-breeding Government farm which was no longer in use: we were told that the whole lot of sheep had died a year back of some unknown disease.

Our food was now ready, rice, dal, potato, chutney and chapatis, and we gulped it while it was still hot. After discussing our plans for the next morning we retired for the night. It was extremely cold and our sleeping bags had to be supplemented with three other blankets which we hired from the *chowkidar* for the night.

Early next morning after a heavy breakfast and a packed lunch of stuffed fried *paranthas*, we, the three males left on foot to make a tour to Saryalsar Lake via the Jalori-Rohtang Pass and back to the rest house by the jungle, making a circuit of about nine miles. We packed our belongings and locked up the van. Lady Betjeman left on foot towards Ani to meet us there in the afternoon via a small temple she wanted to see, which lay on a bridle road to Ani. The bridle road joins the present motor road about half-way between Ani and Khanag.

### X. Jalori Pass and Lake

We reached the top of the Jalori Pass (10,570 feet) about 9 a.m. and there took cups of tea in a cozy warm shop where numerous other people and muleteers were already taking tea. A small temple, quite modern, has been built near this place. After tea we started our trek to the east through the deep forest, which after a continuous brisk two hours' walk took us to the natural enclosed lake of water called Saryal Sar. On the northern side of this lake was a small shrine of Kali and we found a few pilgrims who had already offered a goat to her and were cooking their lunch in a shack in front of it. The place was virtually stinking with the stench of blood all over the temple, the stone idol of the goddess and the ground in front. We were given some *prasad* which we partook along with our *paranthas*. We could not have sip of water from the lake which we found contained millions of live worms which it was very strange to find at such a height (10,250 feet). The original Simla to Kullu trek passed through the banks of Saryal Sar and not where the Jalori is crossed now by the motor road. We left Saryal Sar at 11.30 a.m. due South to our rest house by the steep jungle trek on the foot of which stands Khanag. There is no regular path and just following the direction of Khanag and with a good deal of strain on our legs we made the steep

descent through jungle and barren rock in about one and a half hours without encountering any leopard, bear or any other wild animals we were forewarned for. Except near the lake we did not find any water or spring on the way and this notorious absence of water probably accounted for an absence of birds and pheasants whom we expected to see on the way. The water from the enclosed expanse of water at Saryal Sar probably seeps underground through the porous rocks and emerges at Khanag in a fine perennial spring.

### XI. Behena again, on way to Kheksu

We reached our rest house at 1 p.m. and after a little rest left for Ani. As we were motoring down I saw a large clay coloured snake in a gully on the left which, on hearing the vibrations of our motor ran away with a terrific speed. A few minutes later Lady Betjeman joined us on the road and we started together and reached Ani in a few minutes. Here we took tea and snacks and left for Behena to photograph some bits of the temple the lady had missed on the earlier visit. This time we were faced with a very queer problem. The *chowkidar*, who was also a boat-man, and plied his inflated cattle skin taking and bringing commuters on the other side of the river, would not let us in the temple courtyard not to talk of the temple itself. He would not let us even photograph the outside of the building despite our repeated entreaties.

The river Sutlej is a steep descent of about 200 feet from the village Behena and has at least three hot-water springs on its right bank which give out sulphur fumes. These springs are used by the local populace for bathing, washing and curing skin and stomach ailments.

It was now about 4 p.m. and we were in need of tea and a place to lodge for the night. We requested accommodation in the village for the night but the people apprehending some bad game frightened us away telling us that there was no lodging house or hut in the village and that if we slept in some open space giant venomous black scorpions will sting us to death, the nearest hospital being miles away either at Ani or Rampur. We had no choice now but to move on. After covering about two miles Lady Betjeman looked down below towards the River Sutlej and said 'Oh, we have a fine level sandy beach there and we might well spend a night on it'. Everybody agreed and after the lady cooked a hasty dinner of rice and soda-bread we locked the van and took our sleeping bags and blankets down to the beach. As we lay there I and later others found a commotion over, under and around us and when I switched on my torch we found that we were lying on a nest of hornets, millions of them. They were a great nuisance; and while the lady and David suggested moving over to some other place nearby, Robin and I came back to the van and spent our night in the sleeper. Early morning when we got up the lady told us she enjoyed the sleep out there under the near full-moon. We took tea and biscuits after a little wash-up and started our onward journey to Luri Bridge, from where we had to go to Kheksu to keep our appointment. When we reached the Luri Bridge a fair was beginning to form and people — men and women and children — were already making an assemblage with little pavement bazar made of trinket and sweet meat hawkers. We bypassed them and arrived at the

Kheksu temple at about 11 a.m. The temple was open, the managers had gathered and the temple musicians were making an assembly of their orchestra of trumpets, *shehnais*, *narsingas*, drums and kettledrums. The *kardars* received us well and offered me a cup of milk which I could not refuse as it was hosted by the goddess. We went to see the idols. The principal idol was of the goddess Durga in her usual form of Mahisasur-amardini. The eight-armed goddess was made of yellow golden bronze and was about four feet high and at her back was a colossal six feet high and four feet wide beaten and chased *repoussé* thick brass plate, crowded with hundreds of figures of dancing fairies, animals, godlings, fruits and flowers — and whatever the artist could conceive of — arranged in successive rows which delighted my heart as a unique specimen of Pahari metal craftsmanship. The other things we saw near the goddess were ritual implements. The image of the goddess has been cast in two parts which can be disjoined at the trunk. After seeing this I asked the *kardar* to show me the devi's *bhandar* which was a house type building 25 yards away. In the *bhandar* I saw the top floor occupied by a brass replica (substitute) of the *devi* in the form they call *mohra* or 'bust' and two other *mohras* of her deputies who accompany her when she is taken out for journey elsewhere; as for example today (sacred full-moon day) when she would bless people with her presence on the Luri Bridge. The reason for carrying these substitute *mohras* is quite clear for the fact that carrying the large bronze idol weighing about thirty to forty kilograms would be irksome and the substitute *mohras* made of sheet metal in bust shape, being light, are easily portable. A decorated wooden two or four-post palanquin is normally used to carry these *mohras*. On the ground floor of the *bhandar* in a corner room were housed the *devi's* musical instruments while in an adjoining room were her apparels, bells, pots and finials and other miscellaneous paraphernalia. I looked closely at some of them and the name of Kshumbha Devi Mata, Mandir Kheksu was decipherable in Nagari and Takri characters. No date was however traceable on any of these objects. I was also told that no copper plate or grant document was in the temple. This temple and the *bhandar* occupied an area not over 140 square yards. This was however the famous temple of THE GODDESS WHO TOOK THE LIFE OF HER OWN PUJARI.

The following story was narrated to me by the head *kardar* of a theft which occurred in this temple about six months back. A rich landlord of Kotgarh, Mungi Ram by name, and his accomplice who was a Muslim *gujar* (nomad) both thieves by profession came all the way to rob a rich orchardist and landlord near the village of Kheksu, who they came to know had uncounted wealth in silver and gold. Somehow the thieves could not burgle his house for the reason he had a clever sharp-fanged dog who would not let anybody approach in the night. But, the two thieves were not to go back empty-handed and the only unguarded place for their design, they found, was the Kheksu temple. They broke open the lock of the temple at midnight when they looked at the devi's glittering brass idol they presumed it be gold and tried to take it away. As I have just written, the idol is in two parts and detachable over the trunk, they could only get away with the top part which they carried over to the other side of the Sutlej by the Luri Bridge. They probably tested the metal there which did not turn out to

be to their expectation and finding it only brass left the thing hidden in a bushy place. Meanwhile, a report had been lodged with the police about the mysterious disappearance of the upper part of the goddess and the police posse had arrived from Nirmand to investigate the theft. The *kardars* told me that the police officer who was sent to the temple remained here for a few days and made his own demands of wine and chicken, taking to task specially the *pujari* who did not meet his demands. He made the *pujari* the prime suspect and beat him mercilessly with the help of his deputies. The *pujari* was so much tormented bodily and mentally tortured that he decided to kill himself by committing suicide, which he did by jumping into the Sutlej by the very side of the temple. Meanwhile Mungi Ram was arrested in another case of burglary and on his demarcation the upper part of the devi was recovered from the jungle in which he had hid it and was restored to the trunk from which it was severed. The whereabouts of the Muslim *gujar*, who was his accomplice, were never known and he was never apprehended. Mungi Ram was sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment by the court and he was, we were told, at this time in the Ani Jail. The police officer who had come to conduct the investigation was censured and down-graded when his irresponsible behaviour was reported to the D.I.G. police, Rampur Range. The self-immolation of the priest under the very nose of the goddess he served and worshipped will remain a singular example in the history of devi worship in the hills.

## XII. Janog

In the morning we got up and were ready by about 8 a.m. after a light tea. Lady Betjeman had a chocolate for each of us on a successful completion of the small expedition we had been to without any adverse happenings on the way. Now the last thing to do on our schedule was the visit to the temple of Janog, near Theog, for seeing which the lady was very keen when I had told her that this temple had the nicest Pahari wood-carvings one could see in one's lifetime. We left for Janog and were there in about half an hour. Janog lies on the Theog-Kotkhai road, hardly one kilometer from the Theog bazar. There are two temples, the smaller one and the larger one about 200 yards apart. The latter is the one used for daily worship and does not have much of interest by way of wood-carvings or otherwise; and a new cement and concrete temple with modern idols is also enclosed in its campus. The smaller one, facing south, is extremely interesting and the carvings inside are really an antiquarian's delight. One would wish that the whole temple were removed and brought over to the local museum and transplanted there. This temple covers a space of about 24 feet by 18 feet in addition to a small hut for pilgrims just outside its compound. All its pillars, pilasters, beams, friezes, steles, ceiling, doors everything is so well carved with the figures of Hindu gods and goddesses, dancing nymphs, ten incarnations, birds in pairs, fish in swirling waters, scrolls, creepers and foliage, hermitage scenes with ascetics in meditation, lotus and lotiform compositions, again a ten-headed Ravana shown an ascetic yogi, a squatting primitive Pahari Ganesa (above the door of the sanctum), riders on elephants and what not—all original, untutored work of a Pahari chisel, unfettered by the canons of Hindu *silpa-sastras* (texts). What amazed me most was the construction of the ceiling just before



the actual shrine which showed a tier by tier rising square and circular arches of intricately carved wood finally culminating into a deep hemisphere to the centre of which was attached a carved wooden sphere looking like a suspended ball. Its height from the floor must be about 15 feet. The carved segmental arches, it appeared, had moved from their original places and the entire pattern of the ceiling was in a somewhat imbalance. This peculiar construction of the tiered ceiling is surely the work of a master craftsman who must have borrowed it from the *sikhara* style temples, so common throughout the hills. Another low ceiling compartment adjacent to it on the east is another masterpiece of Pahari carvings. This ceiling, hardly about 8 feet from the floor, has a unique composition of 16 dancing human figures with upheld hands, arranged in a near perfect circle around an *astadala* (eight-petalled lotus) in the centre. What a masterpiece of work! The entire composition is not over 4 feet by 4 feet. The doorway of the main shrine is something indescribable — a maze of well arranged patterns of figures and foliage on the doorframe and the sun-like motif on the hinged door as the one we found in Behena, all adding up to an overall balanced composition. The doorway covers an area of about 6 feet by 5 feet and consists of a set of three well-carved frames. On the planks fringing the roof, on the outer side I counted as many as 50 female figures standing in a file and holding hands one with another with a tiny little mythological incident breaking the monotony of the long file. Near the top of the roof we saw a bust of a divinity, which should be depicting the sun-god Surya as is common in Simla hills. The small windowlet under this figure with ventilets reminds one of the window-patterns of Le Corbusier, the architect who planned Chandigarh. The cornices at the corners of the roof have hardly been left simple and the protruding wooden beams end up in a nicely carved head of a *makara* (*alligator*).

On opening the door of the temple which was a bit loose and turned over the hinge we saw some old Pahari Pratihara stone relics, some badly rubbed, and some not-very-old Pahari sculptures in wood and stone and two miniature votive bronze

figurines. The most remarkable out of these latter were a carved wooden panel about one foot high, showing the goddess Durga in what looked like a Victorian skirt and a schistose stone carvings about two feet high showing the common theme of goddess Durga in her buffalo-demon killing position. Out of the older stone sculptures the only one which I was able to decipher was one of Uma-Mahesvara seated on a bull. This piece, shattered on left side, was about one foot high made of light grey sandstone. Last of the things that caught our attention while taking a round of the small green glade in front of the temple was the figure of a standing guardian of the temple in perfect modern style. It was in wood, made of a squarish beam, with just a small face carved on its top which kept a gaze on the visitors to the temple in front. A coloured rag and a number of coins were nailed over to its face and body which the villagers often do when their prayers had been answered by the village gods. In the larger Janog temple the only interesting object of artistic interest was a *phuli* (door-knocker) one foot in diameter made of brass, bronze and iron showing a lion's mouth with a ring in its mouth, surmounted on a base with an inverted lotus engraved on it. The metal-worker had left his name and date on it stating that the *phuli* was made in the village of Janog by the ironsmith Nardass Sadhram in the month of July, 1946. The officiating priest told us that the god worshipped in the Janog temples was Trigartheshwar, a fragment of which had arrived from one of his principal temples in Kangra (Trigarta). The larger temple from inside could not be examined as the key of the door where the god's busts were kept, was not handy.

After surveying and photographing this temple which took us more than two hours we took leave of the god Trigartheshwar and started our way back to Simla. We reached the holiday home at about 2.30 p.m. where we celebrated the end of our very successful expedition into the Sutlej valley over a hearty cup of tea. After two days of rest, which was well deserved, my English friends left on their onward journey to the south of India, cutting short their planned program due to the sudden rise in the petrol price which upset their budget.

## LEGENDS AND ORIGIN OF SOME OF THE GODS CONNECTED WITH THE TEMPLES DESCRIBED IN THE NARRATIVE

### **Behena Mahadeva**

As the name connotes this is yet another name of Lord Siva, Behena being the name of the village and Mahadeva, the 'Great Lord' being the epithet of Siva. The temple has two major fairs: one on Diwali and the other on the Hindu New Year or Baisakhi. Bhunda, a variation of human sacrifice, cleverly disguised as a primitive entertainment, used to be performed every forty years followed by a collective animal sacrifice called Shand, after twelve years, which has now ceased. Some animals are although slaughtered on these occasions in fulfilment — or in anticipation — of wishes of the villagers. It is said that one Raghu, a Thakur, had a cow which was taken for grazing by a blind boy on the other side of the river Sutlej. For days the cow's milk was sucked by a serpent and the Thakur was greatly alarmed at the waning supply of milk. One day the Thakur followed the boy to the further side of the river and was amazed to see a white snake sucking the milk from the cow's udder. The snake disappeared soon after a drink of milk and from near its hole a metal image was found which proclaimed that it was the Mahadeva itself. The image was brought over to the village and a temple was built where it was enshrined. Miraculously the eyesight of the blind grazier boy was restored. Gaur Brahmins perform the office of the priests. Offerings to Behena Mahadeva are usually things made of iron like rings, tongs, nails and tridents which are conspicuously displayed near the front door.

### **Shamsher Mahadeva**

Shamsher Mahadeva derives its name from the village called Shamsher which has a constellation of Siva or Mahadeva. A stone *lingam* was accidentally discovered by one of the predecessors of the present Brahmin *pujari* lying under the sacred *durva* grass. The *lingam* was brought to the village and with the generous financial grant of the Raja of Kullu, the temple was built by the discoverer in which the phallus-shaped stone

was enshrined. Four major fairs are held: Bhunda, Shand, Jal and the Parbat, all taking place between December and April on dates stipulated by the astrologer. There are ten stone idols and to these *repoussé* brass masks (faces) of Siva keep constantly adding. These lighter brass idols are easy to carry and so, on occasions of fairs they are displayed in a palanquin and moved out in the open pavillion and danced about for hours by the palanquin-bearers to the beat of drums and trumpets.

### **Mananesvara or Manan Mahadeva**

Also called Manani, Mananesvara is the 'Lord of Manan village', his temple situated on the hill of the same name. The principal fairs held in his honour are in the month of April, on Diwali night, a triennial fair called Shilaru Puja, an extensive Puja Mela after every eight years and a still extensive fair called Shand or Shant ('Peace') after every thirty years in which sheep and goat are slaughtered as offerings by the number. (During the State Raja's times on the eve of every new coronation, the God used to visit every part of the state territory to collect offerings of cash and kind. This grand 'Royal Pilgrimage' was known as Rajoli Yatra.)

It is said that a Brahmin who lived in the village called Jalandhar had a young child wife who gave birth to a daughter at the age of twelve. In her virginity, the daughter gave birth to twin serpents, a secret which she concealed from all, even from her parents. She used to keep them in an earthen pot and fed them on cow's milk. Once when the girl was away her mother accidentally discovered the two serpents in her daughter's decorated clay pot and in her nervousness threw burning ashes over them. One of them was killed on the spot while the other escaped and entered a pot of milk which lay nearby. When the pitcher was emptied it was found that the serpent was no longer there and in its place an idol had been made by supernatural transformation. The girl, having come to know about

the death of her two serpent sons, committed suicide by applying a razor to her throat. Deeply grieved at his daughter's death, the Brahmin left his home and hearth and wandered into the Simla hills with the miraculous idol hidden in his turban. He reached the state of Sirmur whose Raja had no son. The Raja treated the Brahmin respectfully and the Brahmin in return promised to give him children by the power of the image he had with him on the condition that the Raja gave away to him his first-born son. The Raja accepted his condition and after some months, the queen bore two sons, one of which was handed over to the Brahmin along with a *jagir* (estate) comprising of lands and villages near Narkanda, by the side of River Giri. The boy was named Mul Raj and he was installed as the chief of his estate with his capital named after his surname as Rajana. The Brahmin occupied the hill of Manan nearby where he built a temple in which the image that he kept in his turban was enshrined amid fanfare. Meanwhile, before the coming of the Brahmin the people of the country had been oppressed by a *rakshasa* (anti-god); and they approached the Brahmin to overthrow the oppressor with the help of the miraculous new god. The Brahmin took prompt action into the matter and the *rakshasa* was duly slain. The people from that time accepted the new god who now came to be known as 'God of Manan', most valiant, reliable and adorable.

#### Kotesvara Mahadeva and Kashumbha Devi of Kheksu

Kotesvara Mahadeva (Siva), once upon a time, used to live with his consort Durga in her temple at Hatkoti on the bank of the Pabar. There was a quarrel between the husband and the wife about something and in his violent reflexes Siva began to oppress the people of the country around with the help of two *Matrkas*. Had Siva become a *rakshasa* or a devil? Two Brahmin brothers whose names were Obhu and Shobhu, caught Siva and the two *matrkas* unawares and shut them all up in a gourd with its mouth corked up. The Brahmins wanted to throw the gourd in a fast-flowing river and so decided to take it to the River Sutlej. As they neared the state of Kumharsain after crossing the Narkanda watershed, the Brahmin, holding the gourd, accidentally stumbled and the gourd fell and broke into pieces; and the imprisoned god and the *matrkas* escaped. One of the *matrkas* flew on to the top of the Tikkar hill and the other flew across the Sutlej and landed at Kheksu where the local people received them respectfully and constructed abodes for them. They are respectively known as Kacheri Mata and Kashumbha Mata. The motherly instinct of these two goddess-mothers and their love for the village folk stopped them from giving any kind of trouble to the people. Kotesvara, however, took the form of a serpent and began troubling the people of Kumharsain. It would suck milk from the cows, devour children and do all sorts of mischief. The Raja of Kumharsain was very much upset at this and he called his head-priest who was a Brahmin of great asceticism to do something about it. The Brahmin went into deep meditation and invoked the god of the gods, Lord Siva. Pleased at the Brahmin's faith and worship, Siva walked into his presence and assured him that no harm will be done to anybody henceforth and that he would leave the place very soon. The Brahmin entreated Lord Siva to stay to which the latter happily consented. Siva appeared to the Brahmin in a dream and selected the two sites upon which two

temples were built for him: a smaller one on the Pichhla-Tibba ('hill at the back') now called Koti and a larger one at the village Mandholi. At first he was represented by a single mixed-metal image but subsequently several others have been added by his *sidē* to keep him company. Kotesvara accepts all kinds of offerings, food, grain, ghee, fruit and animal sacrifice. He is the prime regent of the area (and the Raja was only second to him). The principal fairs held in his honour take place in the month of May, August, June, July and full-moon nights on dates decided to by the astrologer.

#### Parasurama (Nirmand)

One of the most popular Vaisnavite cults in the Simla hills is that of Parasurama or Rama with an axe. He was the sixth incarnation of the preserving god Visnu. Visnu, it may be recalled, takes an incarnation on earth of a human being to destroy a powerful human being whenever he torments and oppresses innocent people on earth, in other words, to create order out of chaos.

The Parasurama incarnation was undertaken by Visnu for exterminating the warrior clan which tried to assert its authority over the Brahmins, the crown of the Hindu caste system. The worship of Parasurama penetrated into the Simla hills through Sirmur, near the plains of the Punjab, where it is still actively practised; but it is not certain how it gained favour with the hill people and how the practice of human sacrifice came to be connected with it.

The origin of the great temple of Parasurama at Nirmand is accounted thus by the local people thus; the great sage Jamadagni became angry for some cause with his wife Ambika, the mother of Parasurama. He ordered his son to kill her and he did so. In expiation of his sin, Parasurama gave lands in charity to Brahmins in Nirmand situated in the Outer Seraj in Nurpur Valley on the River Sutlej. The Brahmins, in return to his charitable deed, decided to construct a large temple dedicated to him and another dedicated to his mother Ambika, both of which are still existent and in good repair.

The Brahmin also agreed amongst themselves to remember Parasurama by celebrating a fair called Bhunda (a form of human sacrifice) every twelve years coinciding with the Kumbha festival on the Ganges at Hardwar, or Prayag (Allahabad). The rite of Bhunda later came to be connected with nearly each and every god in the Simla hills including outer parts of Kullu and amongst the several centres where Bhunda was practised may be named Nithar, Shamsheer, Behena and Gorah (Rampur). With the intervention of the British, the practice of human sacrifice was made to cease, although clandestinely it was performed by the erstwhile Rajas in complete secrecy. After 1900 the human victim was replaced by a he-goat for the Bhunda ritual.

Other minor fairs in honour of Parasurama take place on the Hindu New Year Day (Baisakhi) and other holy days like Diwali, Rakhi, Janmastami, Dussehra and so on.

#### Legend of the Dhankia Mahadeva near Nirmand

The Mahadeva of the 'cliff' or Dhank was discovered by a local

Brahmin thus: The Brahmin had a goat which gave him an immense supply of milk every day. One day the goat, while grazing for grass on the cliff overlooking the River Sutlej, suddenly disappeared in the cleft of a rock and could not be found. The Brahmin had a dream in the night in which Lord Siva appeared to him and told him how the goat had given him a bathing of milk in the cave which was quite inaccessible being located on the face of the cliff where he dwelt, and how he could recover his precious animal if he dared to come to his

abode. Next morning the Brahmin made his way to the cave and there discovered Lord Siva in his emblematic form of a lingam. He started worshipping the lingam and remained with his goat in the cave for the rest of his life. Pilgrims pay homage to the Dhankia Mahadeva annually on the day of Shivratri. The white colour of the stone (limestone) is ascribed to the milk of the Brahmin's goat. The pilgrims take away with them bits of these rocks and use them as panacea for all body and mind ills.



## A MOUNTAIN SACRIFICE

From *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, Christmas Number, 1919

By  
H. L. H. Shuttleworth, I.C.S.

India today is one of the most fascinating corners of the Earth. Her very stones speak of the marvels of her past and now we see her marching onwards towards a destiny which, let us hope, will by its brilliance surpass them all. It is perpetually worthwhile, in passing, to view some of the quaint old remnants of that past of hers, for by doing so we can on the one hand gain an impression of how far she has already progressed towards the higher paths of civilisation and on the other, note the hardihood of some of the old beliefs and superstitions with which modern ideas are clashing.

Nirmand, a large Brahman village in the Outer Saraj of Kulu, looks from its 4,000 feet of elevation down the Karpan valley on to the Sutlej river. Eight miles hence by road to the south-east, but hidden from sight by the hills, lies Rampur, the capital of Bashahr State. This village of Nirmand, almost worthy of being considered a town among the pretty hill hamlets of these highlands, is remarkable on account of the massiveness and height of both its human dwelling houses and its temple buildings. Though each of its five divisions has its own distinctive temple, and there are also several others besides, none of them can compare in respect of size, antiquity and interest with the celebrated shrine of Parasu-Rama,\* par excellence the patron god, or rather semi-divine hero, of the village, whose great fair, held after an interval of

at least twelve years, attracts pilgrims in their thousands from Bashahr beyond the Sutlej, as well as from the nearer Saraj tracts of Kulu, Suket and Mandi.

But few visitors from the Beas valley of Kulu cross the Basleo or Jalori passes in the winter months, nor would the fair at Nirmand, where little drinking takes place, appeal to Kului, to whom rendering honour to a Devta, or local godling, appears to the real outsider to be secondary to drinking as the real business of the numerous series of fairs that are held from March to October in the Beas valley. So the Nirmand Fair draws its attendance almost entirely from the villages of the hills on either side of the Sutlej. Perhaps at no other religious festival in Kulu and Saraj is the Brahman element so strong.

A fall of nearly two feet of new snow on the crest of the Basleo — a pass between the Tirthan valley of Inner Saraj that slopes down to the Beas, and the Karpan valley of Outer Saraj that joins the Sutlej — made us almost despair of reaching our goal, for fresh snow even on a pass of 11,000 ft., renders journeying most arduous, if not dangerous. But the weather complacently cleared in time to enable us to reach Nirmand, a hot spot after the Arctic coldness of our pass, on the day before the actual fair opened. Four days earlier, the small party of five

stripped Brahmans and Sohanas (goldsmiths) had plunged into the dark cavern where Parasu-Rama is kept from one Bhunda to another, and brought one of his two triple headed images out into the upper storey of the temple. There the god stays for a week, worshipped by his devotees and visited by his divine guests, for they too are brought in and seated by him, till on the supreme day of the Bhunda he emerges in full state from his shrine and for a brief spell is placed in the centre of a little grass covered courtyard to the south of his temple. Seated there, he beholds from a distance the performance of the strange Bhunda ceremony, which is undoubtedly a modern survival of human sacrifice. Most of the rites and parading of the deities are held in the long stone flagged open space that stretches along the 125 odd feet of the western face of the temple, along the side of an adjacent temple building and, beyond both, southwards into the town. But before the fair (this year, attended by some 10,000 people), and its unique ceremonies are described, the temple itself merits a brief account.

The massive walls are of well cut stone, strongly bound together by a framework of deodar timber. The western side appears to have been built at four different times. The northern section of the temple is said to be the most ancient. Little damage was done by the destructive 1905 earthquake — thanks to the excellence of the work as much as to the protection of the god. From the back, or east, only the three gabled state roofs, two at the ends and one over the centre of the temple, strike the eye, as on this side, on account of the rising ground, the outer wall is low. The depth of the temple from back to front is some 40 or 45 feet. The sole entrance is in the western face. On this side along the first floor abuts a series of well carved wood balconies at two slightly different elevations. The older of the carvings on the deodar beams and panels are less crude than those of the ancient Manali Dungri Temple of Hirma, or of Jamlu's (Jamad Agni's) many store houses (kothis) in his sacred village of Malana. Except on the stone doorway posts, lintel and two inbuilt stones brought from another temple, there is no exterior stone carving. As is usual in other Himalayan temples of the pent roof and pagoda types, an elegant fringe of wood tassels hangs down under the eaves of the roof. This ornament serves to break the hard line formed by the juncture of the roof and wall. Other tassels adorn

the balconies. Outside the temple by the miniature Shibdiwara to the south of the entrance stands a large stone slab figure of the tutelary Bairon decked out in vermilion paint. Almost in front of the entrance on the far side of the open space is the low circular masonry platform, carved all round its sides, on which the temple Committee and Manager sit when deliberating on the affairs of their charge. The front wall of the temple is not in a perfectly straight line. The middle section is slightly in advance of the sides, which slant backwards. On entering the outside door we see in front the large dark stone slab figure of Durga, or Hirma, piercing the vanquished buffalo demon Mahisha with her trisul.

We take a sharp turn to the left, another to the right, and then advance straight on, till we arrive at the west end of a little oblong open space, on the north side of which stands the central inner temple building, which encloses the sacred cave. In the same building, but beyond the cave to the east, is the treasure store-house. Above is the upper floor and small balcony where Parasu-Rama during the Bhunda week sits and entertains or is entertained by his divine visitors at surroundings less dismal than those of his underground retreat. Strong chains fastened to the bolts of two ground floor doors of the cave and treasure house are taken up to the storey above. In the south-east corner of the little yard is a shed containing a huge painted head of dreaded Kali Mai, where preparations for the death ceremonies (Haban) of Parasu-Rama's human victims are made.

The rest of this huge temple is occupied by quarters for the attendant priests, store-houses for fuel, grain and other supplies.

When the twelfth year after the last Bhunda ceremony is about to expire, the Committee decide whether the great festival can be held in the coming year or not. If ways and means permit — for the cost of entertaining a score or so of gods and some thousands of men for four days is no small matter — the propitious date for bringing Parasu-Rama out of his cave, or, as they say, for Parasu-Rama to come out, is settled by the temple parohits, who no doubt pay some attention to the great god's own wishes, as expressed by his inspired prophet or mouthpiece, the Gur or Chela, here always a Brahman, though elsewhere, especially in

Kulu, the god's spirit may descend into a Kanet or even a Kohli.

This year, 1919, the fair was some three years overdue on account of seasons of scarcity, epidemic, and other calamities, including the death of the manager in November, 1918, when the influenza scourge descended upon these Saraj hills. The mortality in the village constrained the local authorities to postpone the gathering till the epidemic had subsided. On the date of the various ceremonies being arranged with relation to the aforementioned exit of Parasu-Rama, invitations to the festival, penned in Sanskrit and bearing the yellow temple seal, are issued to the gods and human personages of importance who have established connections with the temple, as recorded in the temple bahis, which contain also directions for the conduct of each detail of the rites.

Two Suket Devtas, six from Bashahr and ten or more from Outer Saraj, including those from the two temples of Nithar and Baina, where the Bhunda is occasionally held, are invited, each with his or her musicians, pujaris and tenants.

The more important human guests include the Rai of Dalash and Chief of Shangri State, a member of the old Kulu Royal House, a Rana and a Thakur from across the Sutlej. All bring a goodly following of retainers with them. Where plenty of free feasting and the varied delights of a fair are in prospect, many casual visitors also arrive uninvited.

The temple tenants, too, are numerous and as the cost and toil of the fair falls heavily on them, they have to be well fed. The collection of the grass for the great rope which forms an important item in the proceedings and is almost a quarter of a mile long is done by them. This grass is gathered to an accompaniment of music and made into a cable at Nirmand by the Bheda, whose life once depended on its strength. While engaged on his long task he, too, is fed free at the temple expense.

The day before the outside guests arrive, there issues forth from the temple a procession of the temple pujaris, the guru and nine Brahman girls, each carrying on her head a temple vase marked with a large Swastika cross, and containing sweet smelling leaves. They are preceded by the inevi-

table band of seemingly unwearing drummers and trumpeters, who blow long weirdly fashioned instruments, some with one, some with two or three, and one even with five mouths. In the rear come other musicians with reed pipes. This procession escorts a wrapped-up sacred vase, carried on a Brahman's head, and followed by Parasu-Rama's Egyptian-like, figured umbrella. It first proceeds down the steps to Devi Ambika's temple and thence to each of the five temples in turn. This picturesque ceremony represents the invitation of the gods of Nirmand by the great Brahman hero to his temple to share in his 'jug' or feast, and to watch the sacrifice established in Devi Ambika's honour. This ceremony is known as the 'Kalash'. All the Nirmand Brahman women, most of them clad in long one-piece red dresses, girt with white waist bands and wearing their medieval-looking three cornered head-dress, padded at the back, follow in the procession.

The next day most of the visitors arrive. Their arrival is accompanied by much tedious and undignified haggling as to the extent of the hospitality to be supplied to them by the temple management. When this is over the Devta guests, each according to his precedence, are carried in groups through the village to Parasu-Rama's temple, near which his musicians, fan-bearers and bannermen wait to greet the coming guests. On arrival close to the temple, the bearers of the Devta rush into the dhat, or 'Presence', at headlong speed in the joy of the visit. One god, however, just before entry, changed his mind and ran off till reassured as to the nature of his welcome. Here, unlike Kulu or Mandi, the gods do not come in their palkis or raths, adorned with many masks and little gold or silver umbrellas. They either come in vases carried on the head or are represented by a small image or mask muffled up in rich silk scarves and carried in one or two men's hands. Nathi Nag came in his huge empty copper degcha. No doubt, being a snake of large proportions, he required much space for his gyrations, but the absence of water must have been uncomfortable for him. First came the two Suket,

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\* Parasu-Rama, Rama with the axe, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, son of Jamad Agni, the Brahman hero, who twenty-one times extirpated the Kshatriyas. Barnett: "Antiquities of India" p.9.

then six Bashahr gods, followed by the Saraj Devtas. Most of them were some local form of Mahadeo or Durga. All the Chambus — apparently a Saraj corruption of Shimbu-Nath — came in a body. One cannot help being struck by the prevalence of Shivaite worship, along with that of the even older Nag or water-serpent cult in Saraj, where very few Vishnu temples exist compared with Kulu proper or lower Kangra. Indeed, Saraj, as the name implies, is still the realm of Siva.

The arrival of the visiting gods went on into the following day, when in the evening a procession circuted the town. So, altogether, it was not till after several days that the ceremony of Jal Puja, or worship of the Chandi Spring to the east of the town, could take place. With due ceremony, Parasu-Rama's large brass drinking vessel of teapot shape, with a long spout and lid, was carried from his temple to the Chandi Baoli (tank) accompanied by the same procession as on the first day of the Kalash ceremony. It was solemnly placed under the water spout and filled up afresh to accompany Parasu-Rama back into his cave, there to stay till again brought out at his next 'jug'. All the Brahman women with husbands alive, from the five divisions of Nirmand worship at the spring in turn, so the ceremony is a lengthy one. The vessel was then escorted back to the temple just as it came, in slow and measured progress.

On the return of the procession to the temple, all prepare for the great final rite of the festival. The victim of the Bheda caste is escorted by a noisy band up from the little building below where he has been fasting and watching his rope since he completed it. Clad in only one long shirt, he enters the temple and near the dread face of Kali inside is formally devoted to death. The same rites as are performed over a dying Hindu take place. The appropriate mantras are recited, his body is washed and a white shroud is thrown over him.

Meanwhile some three or four hundred men, tenants of the temple, carry up to the cliff half a mile above and behind the temple the seemingly endless rope. On arrival at its destination it is fixed at both ends — one end to a great post above the precipice and the other to a second post in a field, perhaps three hundred feet below. Then the human victim is carried up to the cliff and fixed to the

hard-wood saddle that is to slide down the rope. At this very moment, Parasu-Rama, all alone in his little palki, covered with sumptuous green and red silk, is amid seething excitement and with great pomp carried out of his temple shrine to the small courtyard to the south-east of the temple, whence he can view the distant sacrifice. As he is borne along we can only see his three faces. That in the centre is a well executed silver one of almost life size. The three are arranged like the Trimurti figures of Siva or of Brahma, the former so common on the outside of sikhara stone temples.

On arrival at the centre of the courtyard, Parasu-Rama's palki is placed so as to face the rope, down which without delay a goat is sent sliding. This is in place of the human victim, who descended in 1856 and met his death owing to the rope breaking. The rope, however, only broke owing to crowds of people pulling on it in order to bring the Bheda over a point where his saddle had stuck. In 1868, therefore, the authorities decided that the human victim should not again be sent down the rope and then, as now, a white goat was substituted. This year the goat, like its ill-fated human predecessor, stuck, but fortunately succeeded in completing its adventurous journey alive, though upside down and in great discomfort, as its piteous bleats showed.

After seeing this and other religious ceremonies, in which animals are subjected to inhumane treatment in the honour of some blood-thirsty deity, one cannot help reflecting whether much is to be gained by preventing a man from voluntarily playing a well paid part in a performance which with due precautions would be far less dangerous either than that readily taken by acrobats in all countries for a livelihood or than the risks that any mountaineering enthusiast faces as a part of his pastime. It is worthy of remark that the Bheda last year himself applied to be allowed to slide down and was bitterly disappointed when not allowed to do his star turn, for which the God's treasury would have paid him liberally.

After the goat reached its destination, Parasu-Rama at once re-entered his temple, a day or two later to return to his murky cave, along with his vessel of fresh water and the other objects which had been brought out with him.



For those specially interested in the inner meanings of such quaint ceremonies as these, it may be noted, that in 1876, in his book on Kulu, (page 320), Harcourt detailed among the objects brought out in 1868 the forty-pound axe of the hero, presumably a reproduction of that given him by Siva, and his bow and arrow. This year, 1919, the most interesting object brought out was a Rani's bust and head metal mask, bearing two inscriptions, the longer of which is in Sanskrit and bears the date Samvat 7, and the shorter of which, just below the neck, is apparently in an early Tankri script, which has not yet been deciphered. The Nirmand copper plate mentioned in Fleet's Gupta inscriptions (page 286) bears the date Samvat 6, the era being probably the Harsha one, which commenced in 606-7 A.D. with the accession of Harsha, Vardhana of Thanesar and Kanauj, the overlord of the greater part of Northern India. Tentatively it may be said

that these two inscriptions on the copper plate and mask, which belong to two successive years, are the oldest of their kind known in the Outer Saraj of Kulu, and that the mask itself is some seven centuries older than any other previously known dated Kulu mask. (See Kullu Gazetteer, page 41 for the latter.) After a night spent in dance, feast and song, on the following morning the visitors, both gods and men, took their leave at the temple and departed homewards. Thus broke up a gathering different in character and appearance from that of the great Kulu annual Dusshera, which Parasurama, like haughty Jamlu, his father, does not deign to attend. And thus ended a ceremony not less strange, and even more ancient, than the weird Lamaistic ceremonies that are celebrated in the northern and eastern extremities of the vast Kulu mountain region.

## EXTRACTS FROM OUR OWN TOUR REPORTS

Report on a Tour of Himachal Pradesh,  
May-June 1982

The main objectives behind the tour were: (1) to locate and visit the *devatās* of Mandi whose names we had collected earlier; (2) to identify and locate the places mentioned by Hirananda Shastri in a "List of Rajas of Kulu" in his report on the "Historical Documents of Kulu", *ASI AR* 1907-08, pp. 272-276. The villages are believed to possess inscribed *mohras*, but the directions are not given by the author; and (3) to visit old shrines on the hypothesis that they may have old masks.

The following notes are arranged in three parts. Part I contains the particulars of the places in both Mandi and Kullu districts which we visited. Part II contains fresh names and locations of villages, *devatās* and directions in respect of both the districts collected during the present tour but which we have not visited so far. And Part III enumerates seventy-five more *devatās* of Kullu, whose locations and other particulars are yet to be confirmed.

..... Mahunag, Gutkar Village, Bahl Ilaka, Sadar Tehsil. 8 kms. before Mandi on the Simla-Sundernagar-Mandi highway. On the left of the road just before village Gutkar.

There is one copper mask (19×14 cms. or 7½"×5½"), one small silver plaque (7×7.5 cms. or 2¾"×2") and one large thin and worn out grotesque copper mask (27×22×9 cms. or

10¾"×8"×3½"). According to the priest, the grotesque face is the *Masānadevatā* aspect of Mahunag, in which he presides over cemeteries. The deity has a grinning face, bared fangs and rolling eyes; two snakes are represented on the neck. The mask is quite large, and is hollow at the back.

## Pashakot Narayan, Deogarh Chawhar, Mandi

*Approach:* Forty-one kms. north of Mandi. A jeepable road turns to the right at village Ghatasani, on the Mandi-Pathankot highway. At a distance of thirteen kms. from Ghatasani, the road constantly gaining height, is village Tikan. We crossed the bridge over the Uhl with a local guide and turned right along an unmetalled road; on our right hand side flowed a stream which contributes its water to the Uhl. After driving for three kms. we arrived at a sign-board marking the Ghamachyan village, but only one house could be seen. Here we proceeded on foot down the slope of the hill crossing several thin streams on the way, then the more turbulent torrent seen before, which flows into the Uhl, spanned by a 7-metre wide temporary wooden bridge. Beyond the bridge, we walked through terraced fields, now climbing all the time, and after reaching the top, descended down the other side of the hill for about two hundred metres. The entire walk took about one hour.

The temple of Pashakot Narayan consists of a shrine and a separate *bhandar* next to it. The base-ment of the shrine consists of alternate courses of slabs and timber, two metres high, over which rests a closed wooden veranda. More than one hundred iron and brass snakes as long as one metre are nailed around the doorway and all along the front wall, those of brass incised with criss-cross lines indicating the scales, and obviously ancient. The doors of the temple remain always closed, to be opened only when the *devatā* declares its wish through the mouth of the *gur*. The Thakur villagers did not allow any photography, and they even resented it when we took down notes. With its impressive architecture and votive serpents Pashakot Narayan's temple is a promising site for further exploration.

In the Mandi Śivarātri fair in 1979 we had seen the *ratha* of Pashakot Narayan, with four silver *mohras*. The god does not attend Mandi's Śivarātri any more, but he still visits the Holi fair at Jogindernagar.

When we returned to Tikan, we also learnt that another *devatā*, Hurang Narayan, is at some distance from there. He, too, attends the Jogindernagar fair.

#### **Kapilamuni *mohra* and temple, Basauna, Kothi Kot Kandi, Kullu**

Hirananda Shastri in *ASI AR* 1907-08, "Historical Documents of Kulu", wrote that Basauna in Kothi Kot Kandi has an inscribed mask of Kapilamuni of 1712-19 A.D., but did not indicate the location of the village. After making local inquiries, we approached Basauna as follows: After crossing the new motorable bridge connecting Bhuntar with Bhuin on the left bank of the Beas, we turned right on a jeepable track. On this track we passed the old mule bridge on our right; Bhuntar's air-strip was also in view on the far bank. After five kms. we left the jeep near a shop selling Kullu caps, and walked for ten minutes. Upon reaching a large farmhouse of one storey which is the *bhandar* of Basauna, the village itself being at some distance, Shri Ved Ram, the old *kardar* or manager (over 100 years old) confirmed the existence of an inscribed silver mask of Kapilamuni, as well as others. We saw the locked room on the upper floor, and arranged to return

later as the keys were not with Shri Ved Ram. But when we returned in the afternoon, other persons were present, and vehemently refused to let us see the mask.

From Shri Ved Ram we learnt that a local Kaika fair will take place at Basauna on July 17, 1983 when Kapilamuni and other masks will be worshipped. (For our experience at the time of the Kaika fair in 1983, see below.)

On our return to Simla, we reported the Kapilamuni *mohra* to Dr. V. C. Ohri, Curator of the State Museum, Simla.

#### **Tour of Kullu on the occasion of *Dussehra* September 22 to October 6, 1982**

In this year's calendar there are two Aśvin months, the first being the intercalary month and the second the regular. The official date of *Dussehra* as determined by the Government of India is October 27, which corresponds to the tenth day of the bright half of the second or regular Aśvin. However, when we reached Kalka on September 23, we learned that Kullu had decided to observe *Dussehra* in the intercalary month, on September 27, exactly one month ahead of the official date for the rest of India. Hence we were able to participate in the *Dussehra* festival in Kullu.

At the *Dussehra* celebrations and in other places we photographed about fifty *rathas* of *mohras*, totalling 400-500 individual masks bearing various dates. Many were inscribed with Ṭākṛī characters.

We learned that the Nirmand bust, and some other images from the temples there, had recently been stolen from the *bhandar*, but were subsequently recovered by the Kullu Police and were in the custody of the Nirmand Police Station. The Police Superintendent of Kullu district accepted our request to allow us to photograph the famous mask and other bronzes during our next visit.

#### **Transport — Communication**

A jeep or a Willy's Break 4 × 4 is indispensable on the secondary roads and tracks. The driver, Bhagirath Sharma (Simla), was found to be absolutely trustworthy and competent in his knowledge of the

region, resourcefulness and kindness. The only troublesome factor was the safety of his vehicle, the steering and wheel-bearings of which needed servicing. There were a few breakdowns due to a faulty carburettor and starter. Like most Indian drivers, he was inclined to sacrifice security for economy by free-wheel descents with the motor off on a narrow and tortuous road. However, a single reasoned — and justified — caution sufficed to induce a more prudent attitude in him. On the whole, the choice was excellent. Bhagirath Sharma proved to be a precious collaborator.

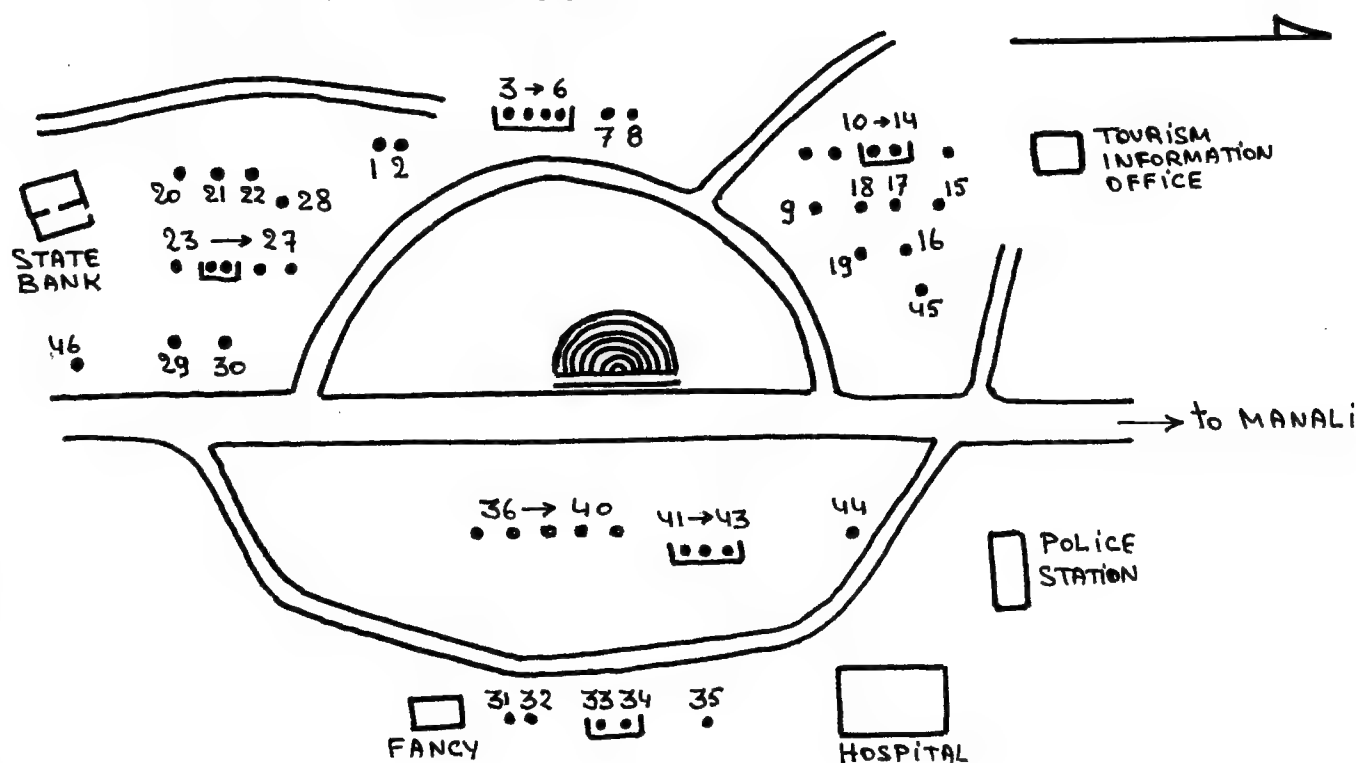
The road was good up to Manali, a town beyond which there is no motorable road apart from the one going to the Rohtang Pass. The secondary roads are narrow, very winding and not always asphalted; the absence of parapets and sideways, together with frequent landslides, makes them dangerous.

## Geography

The Kullu district comprises principally the valley of the Beas and that of its tributary, the Parbati. The principal place, Kullu, is situated on the 32nd parallel, which is the latitude of Tel Aviv, Tripoli and Marrakesh.

The valley, large and fertile, justifies its occupation since ancient times by its natural defences and its climate. The Beas flows therein in a north-south axis for about a hundred kilometres. The valley, entirely surrounded by mountains the altitude of which varies between 2,000 m. in the south and 6,000 m. in the north, is accessible only by flanked gorges starting at Pandoh (recent barrage) at twenty km. from Mandi, at an altitude of 800, and extending over twenty-five km. towards the north, to emerge at an altitude of 1,000 m. in a plateau which rises as it narrows towards Kullu twenty-

Fig. a. Complete diagram of devatās present at the Kullu Dus-sehra, 1982. (For key to the numbers see page 307.)





five km. to the north, at 1,500 m. This area, which is both the largest and most fertile, delineates the "Lower Kullu Valley". The upper portion of the valley (Upper Kullu Valley) extends from Kullu to Manali (forty-five km., 1,700 m.), and is distinguished from the other by its distinctly alpine type and its rather embanked nature. Above Manali, a track leads towards two villages on the western slope of a circular area the glaciers of which feed the Beas. The road bifurcates at Manali towards the east and climbs up to the Rohtang Pass (4,000 m.) leading towards the Chenab valley, Lahaul and Spiti. A little plateau overhangs the left bank of this section of the Beas, between Naggar and Manali.

### Climate

The Kullu district lies at the frontier of two climatic zones: the south zone characterized by the system of monsoons and the continental zone marked by a cycle of seasons. Precipitations are few; the monsoon winds which circulate at 5,000 m. are actually whipped towards the south-west (Mandi and Simla) by the Himalayan spur of Uttarkashi (6,500 to 7,500 m.) and cultivation is not possible otherwise than by means of irrigation from the numerous streams of water. Vegetation is of Mediterranean type and is reminiscent of a climate and a biotope similar to those of Valais and High Provence but which clearly evolves towards the sub-alpine and alpine type as one climbs towards Manali. It snows in December and January which persists in the Upper Valley until March. During our trip, frequent snowfall was observed on the peaks in the Upper Valley. A north-south orientation gives optimal sunlight which enables cultivation of rice (terraced plains and plateaux), maize (on the slopes), fruits (apples, apricots, walnuts and tomatoes), potatoes and, recently, olives. Sheep abound and the wool is used in artisan weaving of shawls. Cannabis (Hashish, Indian hemp) grows here in a natural state, but is cultivated higher up. The plants grow to a height of three metres or more. The inhabitants call it "charas" and have it regularly every evening, it is of a mediocre quality.

### Economy

Kullu principally exports apricots, apples, potatoes, maize and manufactured wool products

(shawls and blankets). Tourism contributes to the wealth of the principal towns of Kullu and Manali since the past twenty years or so. Horses are of a Central Asian breed (Przyluski).

### Population — Cultures

*Kulūtas and Tibetans:* The latter are confined particularly to the northern base of the valley, either permanently or temporarily (construction of roads, bridges and houses). Two monasteries have been constructed recently: one Gelugpa, at Manali in 1968 (Khang, Mani Khor Lo and Mchod Rten), the other at Rangri in 1974, Sakyapa (ten monks).

The Kulūtas are small, brachycephalic, with a straight nose and prominent cheek-bones. Strangely, the feminine costume resembles that of the Bohemians, whose north Indian origin is known.

The nucleus of social structure is the village: numerous rites reflect the ancient feudality which characterizes the political organization of the principality as also an exogamous system.

Culturally, strata showing Kashmiri, Tibetan and Ladakhi influence are evident and bear witness to the importance of the valley, both as a route of incursions, periodical if not permanent, from Central Asia to India from the north-west and linked to the security conditions of the road passing through the plains of Punjab. Undoubtedly the Mandi-Guge axis must have served as an alternative in case of war or customs barriers.

The point merits a complete study with regard to the political and economic context which marked the relationship between India on the one hand and the Iran-Afghan complex on the other. . . . What is striking in the *Dussehra* festival at Kullu is the survival of the feudal tradition and — this is yet to be verified — of exogamy:

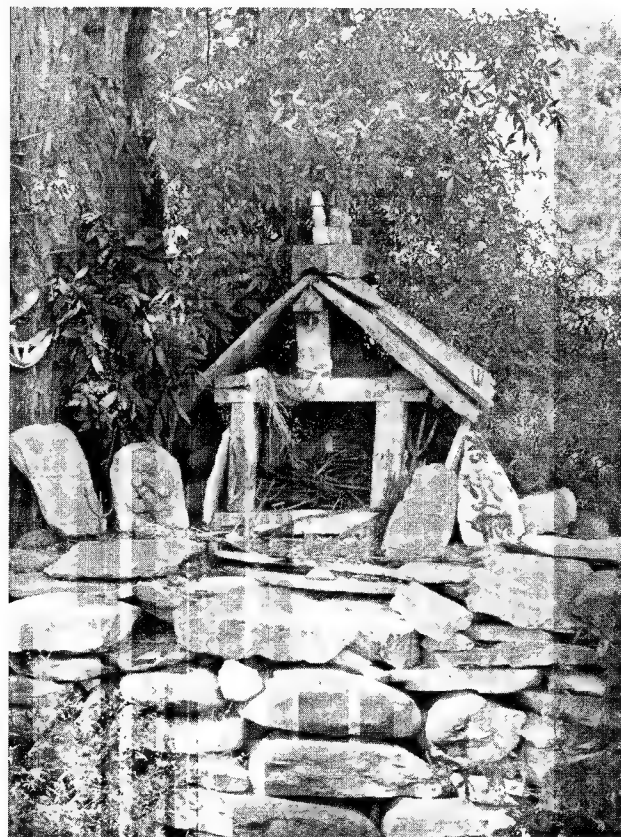
- feudal: the village deities renew on this occasion the lien which submits them to the authority of Raghunath, titular divinity of central authority;
- exogamic: the divine village groups visit each other in their respective camps. They are made to embrace each other and dance, while the assisting devotees mimic a marriage-type of festivity.

..... As for the serpents, which are endowed with the status of chthonian divinity, they also figure in numerous neolithic and protohistoric cultures as being responsible for fecundity and after-death regeneration (psychopomps).

From the information we obtained, they are rarely venomous in the valley, although snake-bite is fairly frequent. Little altars are consecrated to them at the foot of big trees (which are also associated with fertility) and offerings are made to them in the form of agricultural implements or small serpents in forged iron to ensure a good harvest and at the same time to avoid being bitten. Apart from the distance and the slowness of communication between villages, there are other obstacles that generally slow down prospection:

- (1) The ignorance and credibility of the villagers, who, desirous of imparting information, make their "victim" err in the mountain (however, they spontaneously accompany one as guides) losing hours to show them the treasures of Kullu which

Fig. 426. Local shrine, Bhin-Bhuntar.



most often is but an insignificant structure of the nineteenth century which they pretend is 60,000 years old (Viṣṇu temple at Tharman).

On the other hand, one cannot ignore any edifice, however modest or recent it may be, even bordering the road: more than once masks were found stored therein (Dadla, for example). A systematic prospection of the Kullu valley alone would need a month at least.

- (2) Sanctuaries are sometimes closed and the *pujari* absent.
- (3) Sometimes, as was the case in Kullu on October 3 — the *pujari* and his assistants categorically refused to divulge information, and forbid photography of the busts. Fortunately, we were often allowed to photograph, but in conditions most often unfavourable: a group of busts, lodged with flowers, was sheltered in a tent (mediocre light, prolonged and weak exposure, depth of field, recourse to a flash placed at too short a distance), and we could not approach it closely (the masks cannot bear the breath of outsiders).

## Architecture

..... Adapted to the climate and to local conditions (earthquakes).

Fig. 427. Domestic architecture, Jagatsukh.

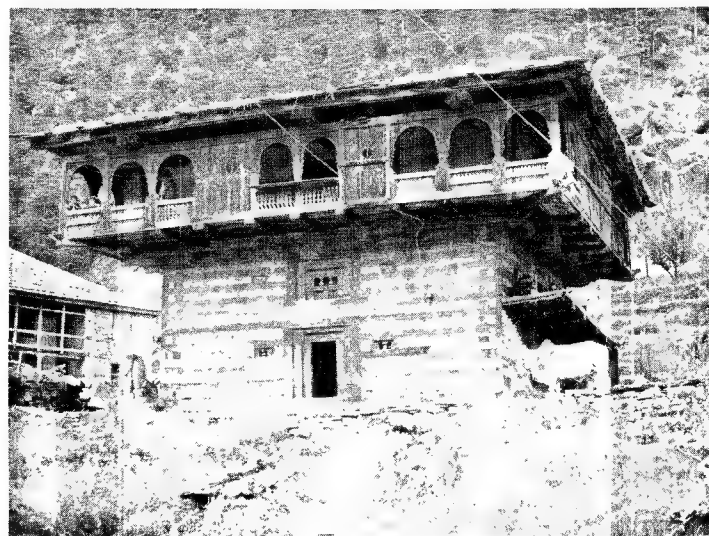




Fig. 428. House between Haripur and Jagatsukh.

Wood, stone and clay are combined in alternate, horizontal strata: beds of bonded, matched rough stones covered with clay and resting on timber beams.

Superstructure in wood: circular gallery at the storey, classical roof with a gentle slope and ridged tiles supported on rafters. Purlins covered with large slabs of slate.

Angle pillars in composite bondwork of rough stones and blocks of wood covered with rubble.

Fig. 429. Wooden temple, Gojari.

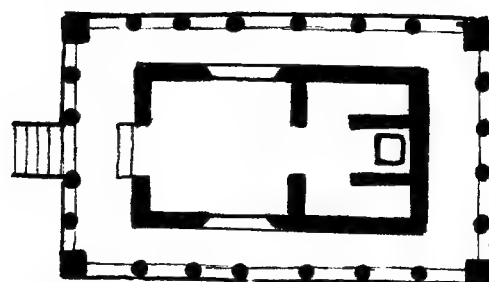


Fig. b. Diagram showing a chalet type of temple, Jagatsukh, Kullu.

The domestic abode strongly evokes the Swiss chalet. There are two types of houses:

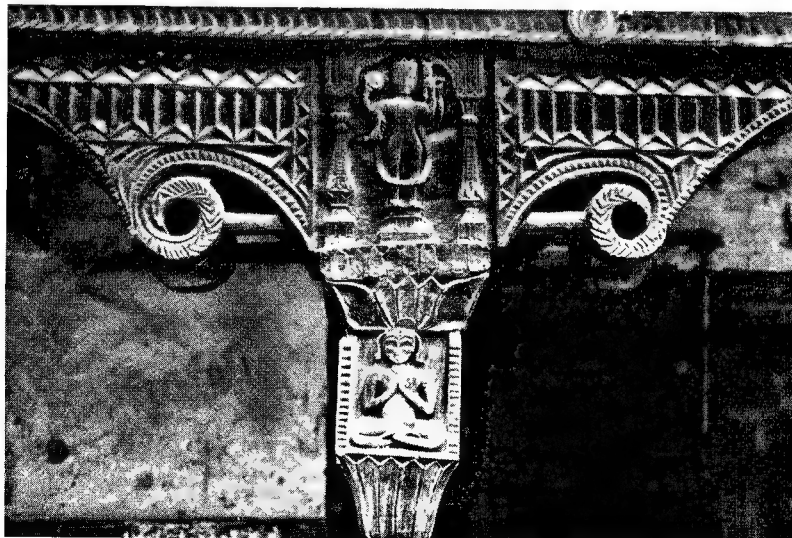
(a) The plain's dwelling: central area constructed with hard material, with barn and stable on the ground floor, rooms in the storey which open into a wooden gallery surrounding three or four sides.

(b) The mountain dwelling; adapted to the slope on two or three gradients:

At the storey level, the house is protected by the barn and the stable. There is no chimney; evacuation of combustion smoke is ensured by a clerestory (gap between the slates supported by walls all round).

Religious architecture is either imported or local.

Fig. 430. Wooden capital, Jagatsukh.



Imported, it consists of a sanctum (naos) sheltered beneath a *śikhara* of the Pratihāra style, facing east or west, and often of modest dimensions. Sometimes a *maṇḍapa* is added later, and a timbered roof protects the superstructures of the *śikhara*.

The oriental *kudū* is almost always occupied by a Śaiva *trimūrti* (Aghora — Īśāna — Tatpuruṣa) characteristic of the region. This style has persisted from the ninth to the eighteenth century.

Local, it adapts the plain's dwelling to the needs of the cult (*pradakṣiṇā*) or consists of a simple little chalet without a gallery.

- (a) Chalet temple: central body constructed of hard material surrounded by a gallery. The façade is generally decorated with sculptured wood. Sometimes, it is entirely in wood (Kigas) and even devoid of the circumambulatory gallery (Naopano). Ornamental foliage decorates the Naopano temple (integrated since this year in a vast sanctuary) totally different from local tradition and to all appearances constituting a Nepalese work (Newari) of the fifteenth or sixteenth century. Always constructed on a foundation. Angle pillars of composite wood, rough stones and rubble. Columns in wood of the Moghul type, fluted and grooved and supporting a large capital derived from the Vākātaka-Gupta type, with lateral consoles terminating in a scroll.
- (b) Derived from the plain's dwelling: the gallery is not at storey-level but rests directly on the foundation (Hiḍimbā temple at Manali).

N.B. Several temples open to the west.

### Tour of the Chenab and Sutlej Valleys October 21 to November 2, 1982

#### Transport & Roads

.....The driver, a Lahauli from Kirting, proved to be fully competent, well-acquainted with the tracks and kept his car in the best condition. He was able to cover the 170 kilometres between Kothi and Udaipur via Keylong in less than twelve hours.

All roads were good except in the Chenab valley where, in some places, the road looked rather like a chaotic track, being frequently obstructed by fresh landslides and stone-falls. Nevertheless, the Ambassador was able to surmount these incidents as did the buses and trucks.

However, premature snowfalls in Lahaul caused the Rohtang Pass to be closed at dawn on October 25, a few hours after we crossed it, and it remained closed for at least eight days; forty people (and amongst them a group of fifteen Germans) were blocked in Khoksar from October 26 until they were rescued by IAF helicopters on November 1 only.

Hence we still got our chance to visit Udaipur this year, as the Rohtang is the only direct access to Lahaul, the tracks leading down from Leh through Zaskar, Bara Lacha Pass and Bhaga valley or up along Spiti and Chandra valleys being subjected to the same climatic restrictions. Snow-cutters are, however, stationed on either side of the Rohtang. The "Tibetan Road", we planned originally to ascend to Kalpa in Kinnaur, was free only beyond Nichar, a village beyond which Indian nationals need authorization from the District Officer in Rampur; foreigners have to apply personally to Ministry of Home Affairs in Delhi or, to its subsidiary in Simla. This road is, mainly for military reasons, easy of access and well maintained.

#### I — Upper Chenab Valley

Two main places had to be prospected in this southern part of Lahaul: Udaipur and its Markulā-devī temple for the wooden carvings, some dating to the eleventh-twelfth century that this building contains and for possible masks and bronzes; Triloknath for the wooden masks that are, according to Vogel (quoted by Francke, *Antiquities* I, p. 3 and Chaudhury, *Temples & Legends of H.P.*) displayed on a wall of the temple.

Furthermore, a proper prospection of Chamba, still to be carried out, would not have been complete without a survey of Udaipur-Markulā that, both politically and stylistically, has to be included in Chamba's cultural complex, although the whole of Lahaul is culturally related more to Tibet and Ladakh.



The most striking feature when crossing the Rohtang is that one moves without transition from the mild and temperate climate of the Indian pre-Himalayan hills, such as Kullu, into the barren and quite sub-arctic valleys which are characteristic of Central Asia and this fully justified the saying that Kullu is the "end of the habitable world".

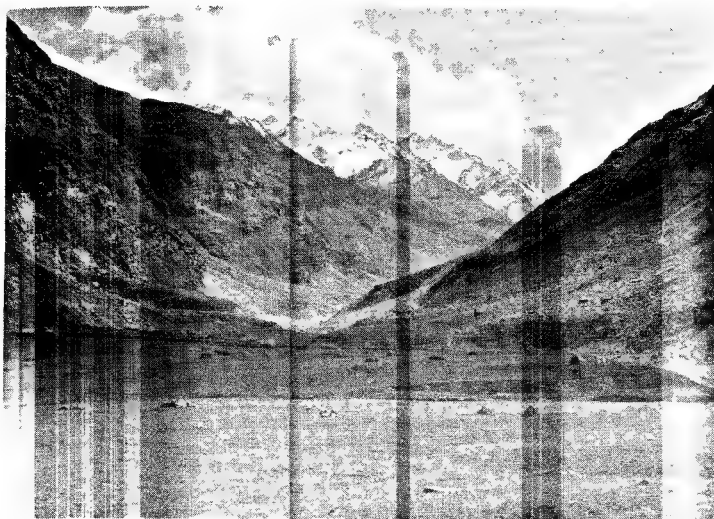


Fig. 431. Barren landscape of the Chenab valley.

The Upper Chenab Valley runs from east to west at an average altitude of 3,000 m. (3,300 at Khoksar, 2,850 at Udaipur). It is an almost narrow defile sunk between barren blanks and cliffs, the southern slopes being almost vertical and capped with snow and glaciers, some peaks reaching well above 6,000 m. The valley is so placed that it lies parallel to the dry and cold northern recurrent jet stream of the Central Asiatic winter depression that overruns its southernmost border, from west to east, and meets the wet and warm air-stream of the Indian sub-continent so that heavy snowfall occurs as early as November and lasts until March (up to 3 m. thickness). Drought results from altitude, wind, frost and scarcity of rain from March to November. As the banks are barren and lack almost any vegetative protection, their schists rot and are pulverized into an impalpable dust that turns everything into a monotonous and sad greyness. There are hardly any trees to be seen outside the villages where willows and sparse poplars recall the high valleys of Afghanistan and Iran. Scarcity of wood causes the flat-roofed houses to be built of

piled-up stones covered with mud, as in Afghanistan and the hills of Iran. Walnut trees are grown, barley and sometimes corn, but potatoes are the main crop. In some parts, such as Gundla, the valley widens into the table-lands where other crops and trees grow to temper the desert-like appearance. Pine trees can be seen in the region of Udaipur and Triloknath.



Fig. 432. Flat-roofed house, Chenab valley.

Animal husbandry consists mainly of dzos, yaks, alpine cows, sheep and Przyluski horses. The birds are mainly flocks of sparrows and jackdaws. No birds of prey were observed as, most probably, no small animals dwell there.

Many villages are without electric power (Khoksar, Triloknath, Udaipur, Tharot), the others being provided with small hydro-electric units which deliver, as in Sissu, a theoretical output of 100 kw/hr., as long as the stream does not get frozen, and a 60 W lamp delivers only between

30% and 75% of its power. Scarcity of combustible material (wood and kerosene) causes the people to live in very hard conditions. When we were there (end of October), night fell at six p.m. and day break was past six a.m. and yet frost was noticed in Kiriting.

We confess this was one of the most desolate landscapes we ever crossed.

However, the Bagha valley, by far wider and better oriented (north-south) seems to be less sinister and cold and is even pleasant in Keylong where apples are grown.

## UDAIPUR

..... Bitterly cold, windy and dusty (and no blankets in the Tourist Lodge). Military camp. The western base of the valley was completely overcast and snow-capped the distant slopes. As we reached Udaipur by four p.m. we paid our first visit to the Markulādevī temple that evening. The building had evidently been altered and enlarged several times; it contains a classical eleventh-twelfth century Kashmiri wooden screen on the eastern side of the cell, and Kashmiri or Chamba carved wood coffers on the ceiling of the *maṇḍapa* of a slightly later period (twelfth-thirteenth century) but strongly reminiscent of the style of the carvings of Alchi in Ladakh. Three of the coffers are Hindu, the northern one being Buddhist (Māravijaya), all of very good and fine structure and in a fresh state of conservation. The lintels are evidently later and could be parallel with the carvings of the Hiḍimbā temple in Manali (mid sixteenth century), although they could be earlier. On both inner jambs of the projecting balcony are two wooden panels which Goetz believes to be ancient copies (sixteenth century) of older prototypes. The name of the temple is spelt as either Markulā or Mirkulā, a word apparently devoid of any connection with Sanskrit.

On the other hand, the etymology of Lahaul, sometimes spelled Lahul, seems clearly, at least to us, a transcription of the Tibetan Lho-yul or "Southern land" which fits well with the fact that Lahaul was once the southern part of Ladakh at a time when Ladakh was still a part of Tibet. In Khoksar, "East End", there is a *chai-khana* bearing the name of Loyul Dhaba.

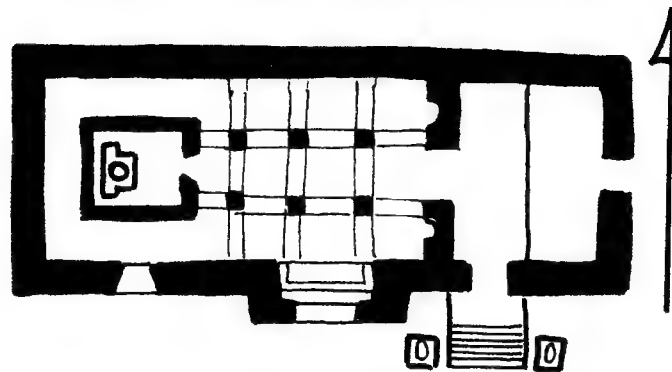


Fig. e. Udaipur. The Markulādevī temple (not to scale).

We kept busy the whole morning of October 24 in making photographic recordings of the carvings. Lighting conditions were very bad and we had to pause for 15 to 30 seconds to try to clear up over-shadows by sweeping the coffers with a torch-lamp. Doubtful about the results, we proceeded a second time, operating with a flash. The brass Durgā in the shrine was completely hidden with scarves and no bronzes or masks were to be noticed.

The drought was such that we often got discharges of static electricity when touching metallic parts of the car. Under such conditions, we were afraid that such discharges were likely to badly disfigure the films with spots and stripes.

The weather that had improved at night got worse again and as we guessed that this was caused by rain over Kashmir that could result in snowfall in a day or two, and having finished the essentials of our work in Udaipur, we decided at noon to proceed without delay to Triloknath that was said to be a distance of only one hour's walk (our estimate was three hours).

## TRILOKNATH

..... The cliff, some 250 m. of glossy vertical wall, on whose edge the village of Triloknath is perched, is six kms. east of Udaipur, the houses all clustered together.

Once again, the temple as it is (see sketch of ground-plan) is no more in its original state and but for the superstructure of the *śikhara* is entirely enclosed in a recent building. It contains only a

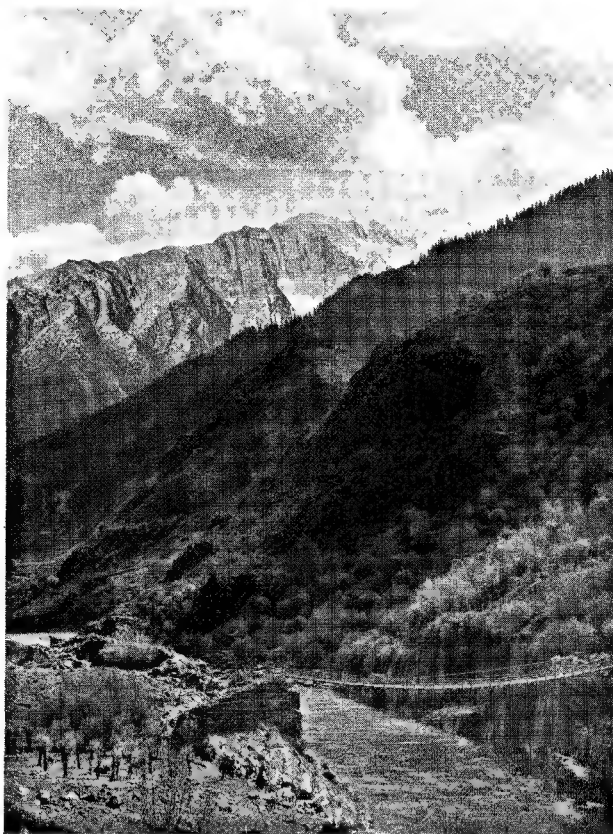


Fig. 433. The bridge across the Chenab to Triloknath.

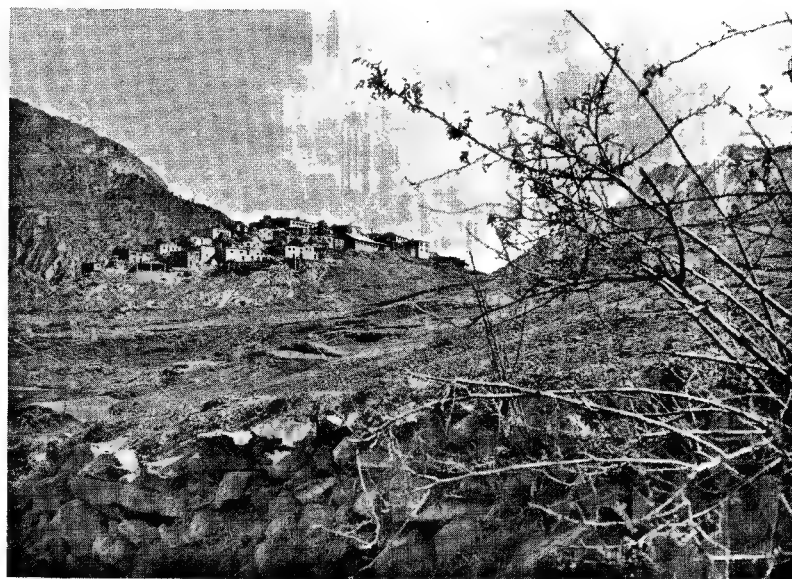
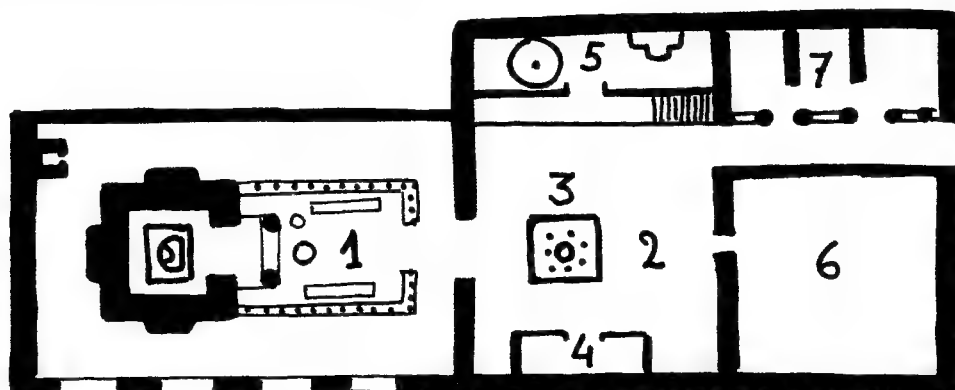


Fig. 434. Distant view of Triloknath.

modern white marble icon of a four-armed (?) Sgyan ras gzigs, entirely covered with scarves except for the face which we judged to be of pan-Indian stylistic workmanship of the nineteenth-twentieth century like those made nowadays in northern Gujarat. There was no trace of any wooden masks alluded to by Vogel, and the old Gelugpa lama in charge told us that he had never heard of any. Although a Buddhist shrine, the place is also visited by Hindu pilgrims who claim Triloknath to be a manifestation of Śiva and indeed, the way the icon is venerated completely fits with Hindu customs.

Fig. f. Triloknath. The Triloknath temple (not to scale).



The temple, as the local legend runs, was formerly a Śaiva shrine which Padmasambhava converted into a Buddhist one as early as the middle of the eighth century, a statement we can hardly believe as the *śikhara*, of an evidently much later date, still bears Śaiva faces of crude workmanship on its outer masonry. The original Śaiva *trimūrti*, which most probably was put above the lintel of the entrance to the *śikhara*, has been inserted in the outer side of the eastern wall of the modern building. Its style and workmanship also point to a relatively recent date. Inside, a small *torāṇa* with Buddhist iconographic features, which cannot be dated beyond the sixteenth century (we guess it to be of the seventeenth or even eighteenth century), precedes the entry once to the cell and adds to the impression that the actual Śaiva shrine was built as late as the fourteenth-fifteenth century and was converted to a Buddhist one still later probably when it came under Ladakhi control. Much is credited to Padmasambhava that is obviously posthumous or purely legend such as his origin in Mandi (where he could indeed have stayed on his way to Tibet). He was more probably from Swat, as this valley actually seems likely to correspond to the ancient geographic concept of the Tibetan Za-hor and the Sanskrit Uḍḍiyāna, which other scholars claim also to be in south-east India. At about 150 metres above the river on the path leading from the bridge to Triloknath, we saw a stone slab decorated with coffers near which stood a hero-stone not quite as ancient as the stone coffers which could have been part of the ceiling of an early temple, perhaps Pratihāra or even earlier.

Next morning, on the way back to Khoksar, we halted at the Gundla castle; it was found cleared from the secondary western wing which is seen in ancient photographs. No Tibetans seem to have actually settled on the banks of the Chenab, although there might be a few in every village.

## II—The Sutlej Valley and Nirmand

The weather was overcast, with showers and lightning over the whole western Himalaya as we proceeded from Simla to the Narkanda Pass (2,750 m.) by the ridge road whose altitude varies between 2,300 and 2,700 m. We were struck by the form assumed by the lightnings which was exactly like that depicted in Pahari miniatures, viz., a hori-

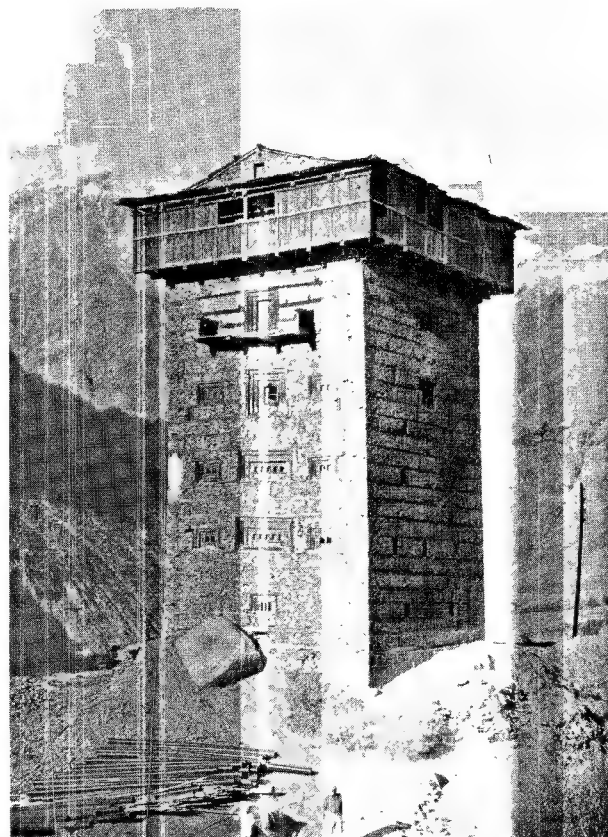


Fig. 435. Gundla castle.

zontal undulating stripe. On the way, we stopped to visit a small temple in Lafughat, a small village midway on the Simla-Theog trunk. The temple, dedicated to Kṛṣṇa, contains only recent popular bronzes in the Simla style. In Narkanda, there is a shrine with a modern brass icon of Durgā and one silver squarish mask of Nāga, quite recent (nineteenth-twentieth century) which the *pujari* did not allow us to photograph.

A variety of cactus grows in profusion along the road in the valley, similar to the Mediterranean species called "figuier de Barbarie", every leaf bearing fig-like fruits of a purple-crimson colour, very juicy with a sweet, slightly acidulous and very refreshing taste. They are obviously not used by the inhabitants and none of them was able to tell us whether they were edible or not. We think it worthwhile to refer this to a botanist for, if these figs prove to be harmless, they could provide the inhabitants with a valuable drink. When pressed, a single fruit produces about 15 ml. of a purple juice which has the consistency of water.



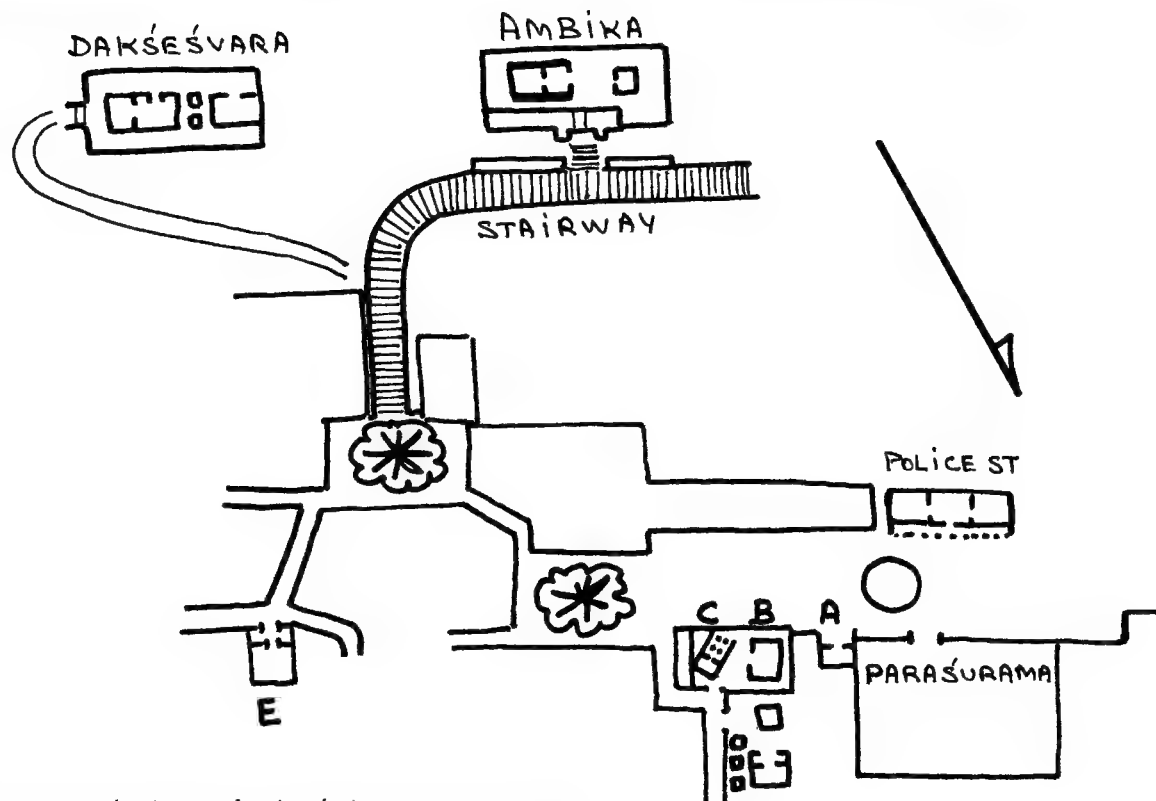
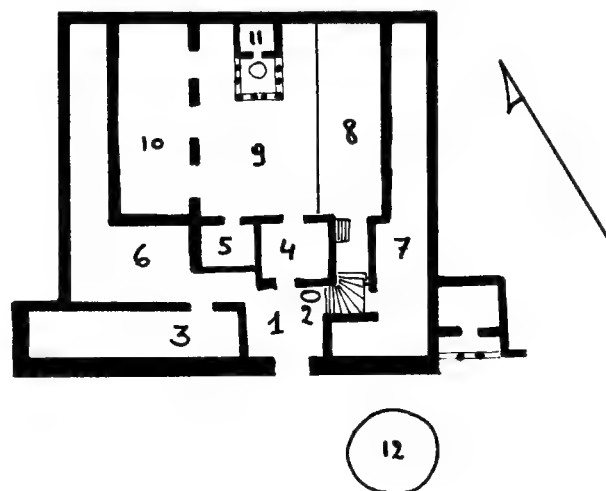


Fig. c. Nirmand. Diagram showing the important monuments (not to scale).

Nirmand was reached in the late afternoon, after we picked up on the way the Police official we had previously met in Kullu on October 3. He was expecting us and was very kind and sensitive to our problems; smoothed things out so as to make it possible for us to see the bronzes of the Paraśurāma *bhandar*, and examine and photograph them at our leisure.

Those bronzes, amongst which was the famous "Mujunīdevī" bust, that in so far as we were able to understand, was brought out only once, in 1919, from its cellar, were stolen some five months ago from the cellar where they were kept unrecorded and unpublished, and recovered about one month ago by the police in a dealer's shop in Delhi's Sunder Nagar market, and since then kept in custody at the Police Station of Nirmand amongst about twenty-five others of varied provenance (Andhra, Maharashtra, Nepal), some quite modern, that were seized in the shop at the same time. A few silver *mohras* (three or four) were not recovered as the dealer confessed to melting them as

Fig. d. Nirmand. The Paraśurāma temple (not to scale).



they seemed to be of no great antiquity, nor was the Paraśurāma triple mask (most probably a Śaiva *trimūrti*) in brass or gilded copper (cast or *repoussé* work?) of which we only saw a couple of colour photographs of a very poor quality.

We kept busy the whole morning with the photographic recording of some fifty items which had to be done outside as no room was available with proper lighting conditions. The weather was getting overcast anew and rain threatened.

Next morning we returned to the Ambikā temple to which large stone stairs lead, the origin of which nobody is aware of. The stairs furthermore extend beyond the temple by some 200 steps. Their monumental appearance however is in striking contrast with the actual urbanistic environment, and they link the temple to a small area which could have formerly been the yard in front of a palace which of course is no more existent as it, if it ever existed, has been replaced by a recent building in concrete.

..... Near Rampur, the valley narrows as the road takes a bend towards the north-east, and from there, the progression of the "Tibetan Road" proves to be of the same complexity as the one linking Pandoh to Kullu valley.

The main ethnic bulk is of a marked Tibetan strain, but we noticed a few people with pronounced Australoid features, such as curling hair, dark skin, flat nose and a tendency towards prognathism which can be traced back to the pre-Aryan races of north-western India that were driven from the plains into the remote Himalayan valleys.

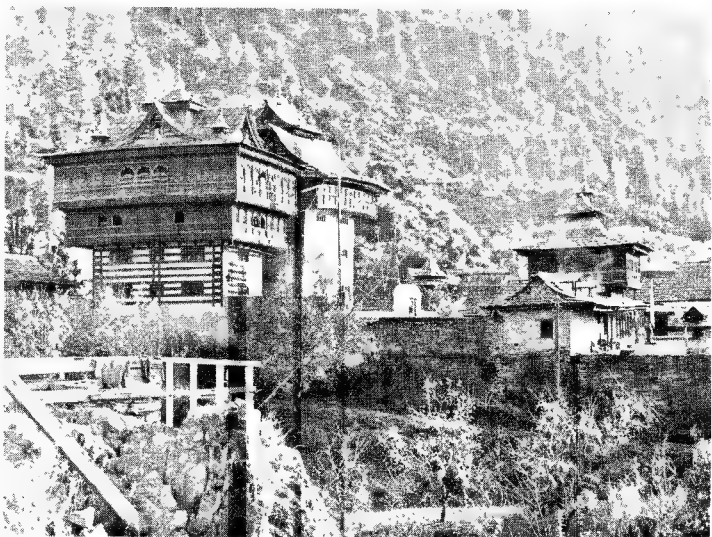
As we intended to visit Sarahan (formerly the Raja's palace) [Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet* I, p. 8] we were cautioned not to display any camera as it happened that people were often bothered when attempting to take photographs, their camera being crushed or even, as we were told, their legs being neatly broken. Sarahan is situated on a small table-land high above the valley, well over 2,000 m., from where there is a wonderful panoramic view of the snow-capped ranges of Kinnaur. The temple is a vast complex enclosed by a fence (ca 150×100 m.) and displays very fine specimens of Himachali architecture, mainly of the

turreted and palatial type, although with a more pronounced Tibetan flavour (see sketch of ground-plan). The keepers and priests were friendly and let us visit the northern turreted temple where we were admitted into the two sanctums located in the upper storeys. Everything was fresh and of quite an unusual cleanliness.



Fig. 436. Ambikā temple and stairs leading to the temple, Nirmand.

Fig. 437. View of the architectural complex, Sarahan, Simla.



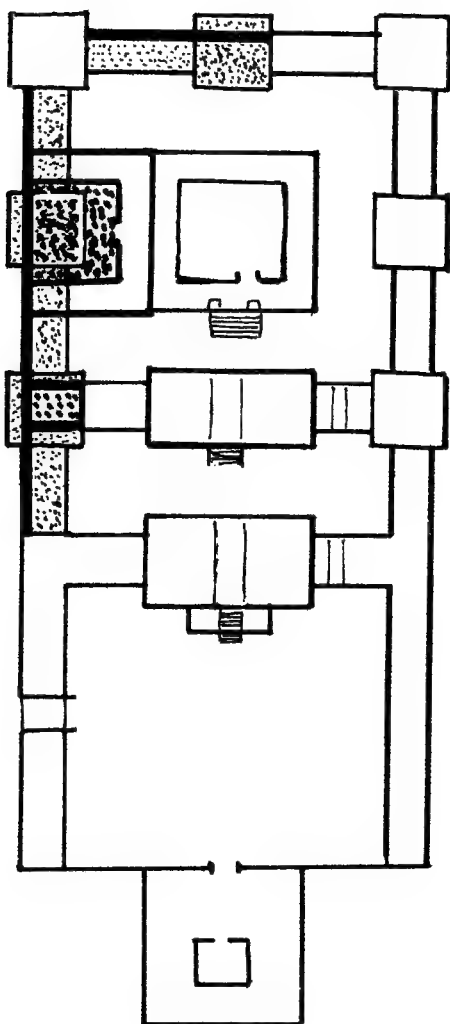


Fig. g. Sarahan. The Bhīmā-Kālī temple or the former summer residence of the Raja of Bushahr. Black dots mark the area destroyed after 1909. Red dots mark the actual state (not to scale).

Both cells contain a fabulous collection of bronzes, Hindu as well as Buddhist, some of them very ancient and almost all of an outstanding quality, besides about ten embossed silver *mohras* of the B style (Chamba-Kullu) and some five or six cast in brass of the Simla A style, apparently more recent. Amongst the Hindu bronzes and brasses we noticed an obviously very ancient Durgā 80 cm. in

height, decked in silk but whose face, although worn, offered striking stylistic and physiognomical similarities to a Gupta bronze mask. The priests raised no objection to our taking photographs of the outside and placed no restriction as regards the few stone sculptures and nineteenth century silver embossed doors. We were even shown a small undecorated cell in the southern aisle where formerly human sacrifices (*naramedha*) used to take place.

On the way back, we halted at Rampur where three temples had to be visited, but they had nothing in particular to offer except for a few stones in the popular style and the odd architecture of one which mixed the Himachali *śikhara* with the Bengali curved roofing and stood in an incredibly filthy environment and stench of urine.

..... The road descended to Chail (1,400 m.) where we entered the small and pleasant valley of the Giri river oriented upstream in a west-east axis, the northern bank contrasting in its barrenness with the relative luxuriousness of the vegetation on the southern bank. It is in the Giri valley that the dungeon-like turreted temple attains its most elaborate development and brings out the best of its palatial prototype: the valley has such huge buildings (Kotkhair, Jubbal), often enclosed in the wings of palaces. The Kotkhair castle, at present transformed into a school, was evidently a fortress because of its location on a natural buttress shutting off half the valley. In Jubbal, two palatial complexes are at a distance of only one km. from each other.

..... The various alternative paths chosen by the caravans depended greatly on the political background of the routes and were linked to security from bandits and halting places where, moreover, stock-exchanges and transactions had to be safely carried out. Local toll barriers and various attempts by the Mughals and some local powers to gain monopoly on parts of those routes is a very plausible reason for episodic shifts of the main trunks from one valley to another. Hence the sudden concentration of many such temples and palaces in so relatively small a geographic area, all of them being apparently contemporaneous, and their heyday in many cases having been only of a short duration, as political conditions were subject to sudden changes and reverses.

# Tour of Chamba, Bharmaur, Chhatradi November 18 to 27, 1982

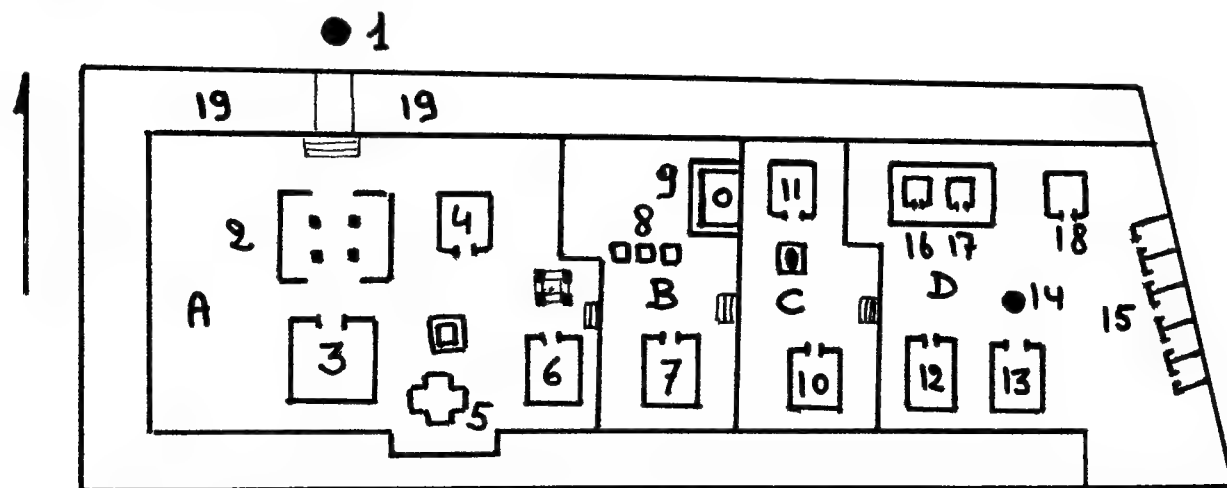
## Physical Data

The Ravi valley and its approach from the south may grossly be divided into three parts:

- (1) North of the rich and fertile peneplain between Dhar (twenty-seven km. north of Pathankot) and Dunera, in which one gets one of the most beautiful landscapes, starts a low mountainous region consisting of huge hills of alluvious conglomerate pudding, in which former rivers and erosions have carved small canyons, and extending from Dunera up to Banikhet. Climate is of Mediterranean type.
- (2) The Middle Ravi valley (the Lower Ravi, running west, we have not visited) starts from Banikhet (ca 900 m.) up to Chamba (1,100 m.) and consists of schistose gritstone. The valley is wide, fertile and characterized by a sub-alpine climate and fauna. Black-birds, jackals and musk-deer are common. Between 20 and 30 km. from Chamba, one section is noteworthy from the Central Asiatic flat-roofed habitations of the Thakurs very different from the chalet-type which prevails in the valley. Those houses are built up with piled up ragstone and covered with mud.

- (3) The Uppere Ravi extends eastward between 1,100 and 1,300 m. from Chamba (1,100 m.). The valley gets much narrowed with steepy banks of schist. The northern slopes are almost barren with only very few habitations and cultures. On the upper parts of the southern slopes and on epaulements are a few big villages such as Chhatradi (ca 1,800 m.), Bharmaur (ca 2,000 m.) and forests abundantly providing timber-wood which is drained down the rivers, collected and exported. On those slopes are grown apples, potatoes, corn and barley. Holly trees are very numerous. The climate is alpine, quite dry, and snow falls from December to February. Although Chamba is of a relatively easy access, Bharmaur and Chhatradi are very remote and hard to reach. Bharmaur, the former capital, is located in what could be called a *cul de sac*. Particularly in the upper part of the valley, houses are of the chalet-type, mixing stone and wood materials but unlike in the other parts of H.P., where walls are commonly built up with the alternative layers of stones and *deodar* beams, there is, in the Upper Ravi, besides the common system which is also practised, a way of building the walls starting with piling up stone pillars at the angles and secured into a chainbond of short

Fig. i. Chamba. The Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex (not to scale).  
(For key to the numbers see page 307.)





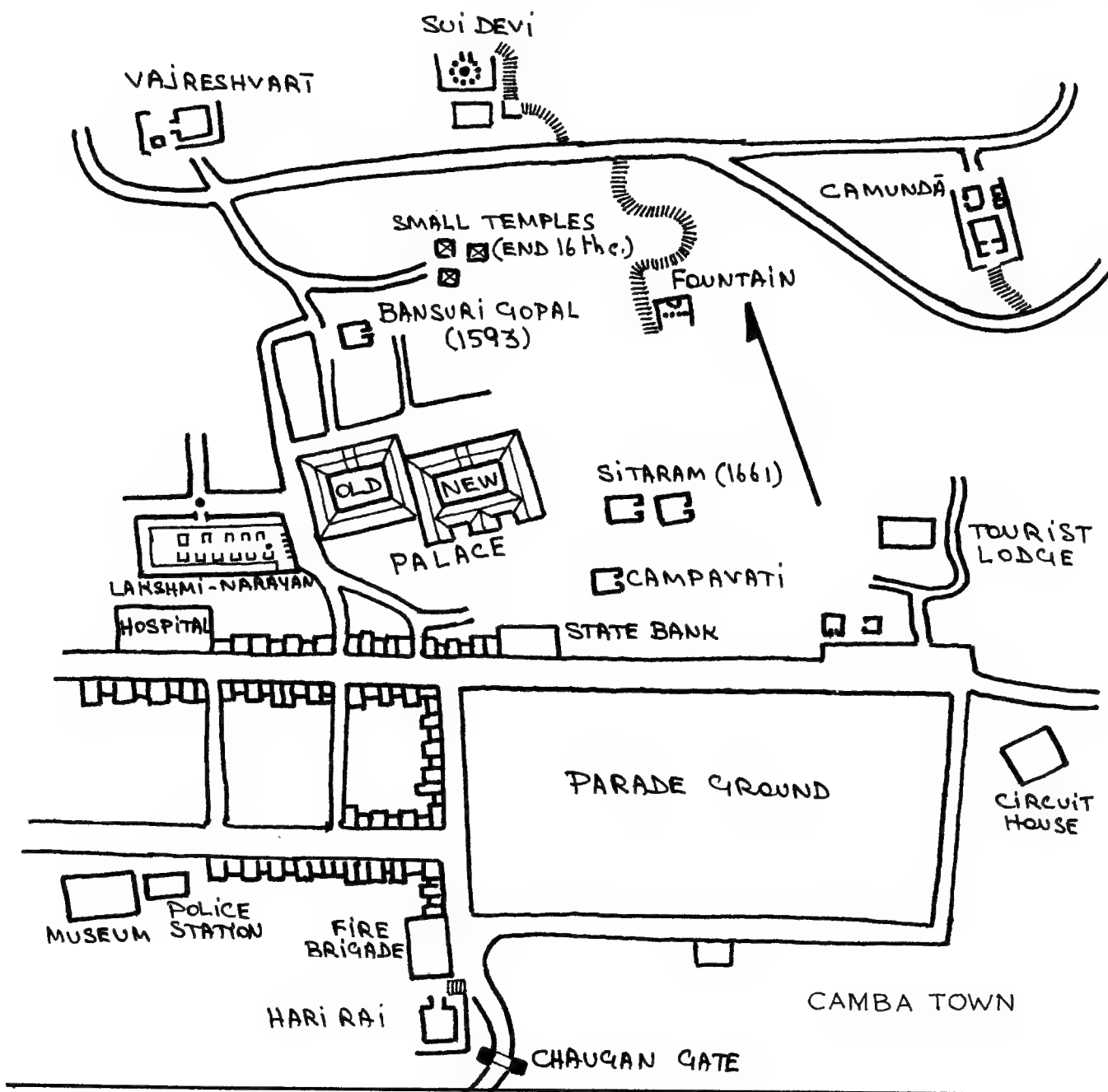


Fig. h. Chamba. Location of the monuments (not to scale).

wooden beams. If the wall has to be of some length, extra pillared chainbonds are built up between the angles. The frames of doors and windows are then put into their proper places and all the timberwork finished before the walls are finished by piling up flat stones between the chainbond pillars. Roofs are double-sloped and covered with relatively thin tiles of schist.

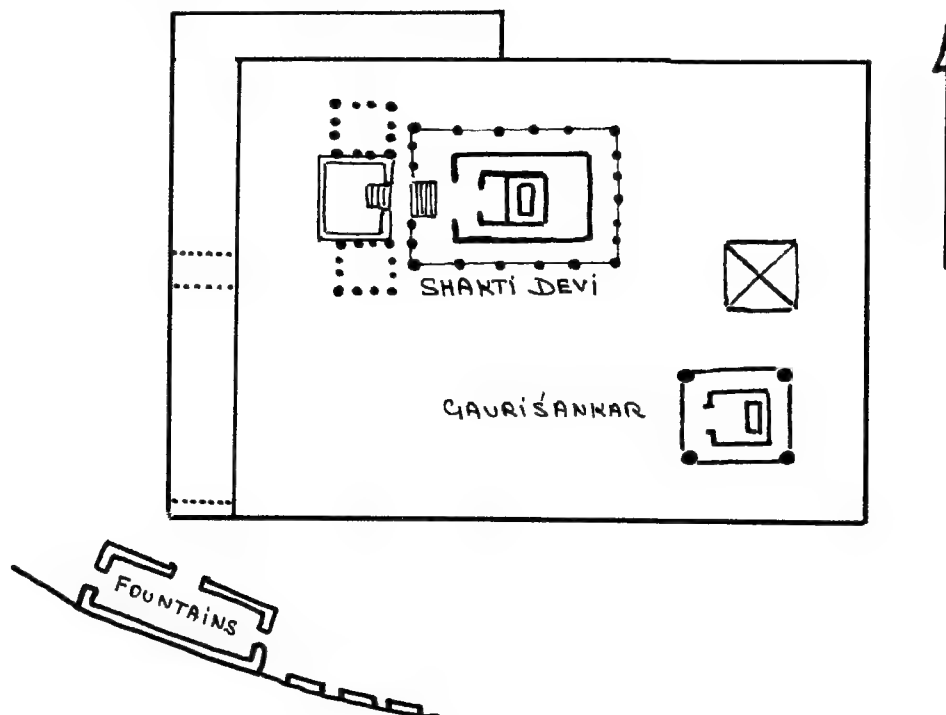
..... Approach to Chhatradi: Drive up to Luna, 30 km. east of Chamba on the road to Bharmaur. Three tracks lead to Chhatradi from this village: one is foot-track about three km. long, but it is very steep, moreover it bifurcates often and hence is suitable only for the local inhabitants; the second is a mule track, three to four km.; we used this for the return walk (one hour); the third is an unmetalled road of ten to twelve km. negotiable by jeep; although it is the longest, it is the best choice for a stranger, and it has an easy gradient, hence we decided to follow this route. Unfortunately, part of the road had collapsed in a heavy landslide, and we had to retrace our steps to regain the road at a higher level by means of a foot-track. The Luna-Chhatradi walk took two hours and twenty minutes.

## Tour of Mandi, Śivarātri February 11 to 16, 1983

In May 1982, we had carried out field work in Mandi and Kullu districts to explore the temples and to identify and locate some known and inscribed *devatās* reported by H. Sastri in *ASI AR* 1907-08. Then in September 1982 we attended the Kullu *Dussehra* fair and also surveyed some temples in that district. In October we visited Udaipur and Triloknath in Lahaul, and Sarahan and Hatkoti in Simla, to explore the temples in those districts, and Nirmand to photograph the Nirmand bust and other bronzes. In November, again, we toured Chamba, Bharmaur and Chhatradi. And finally, in December 1982, we visited Nirmand and Behena to locate other masks.

Our present tour was intended primarily to attend the Śivarātri fair at Mandi where many *devatās* from this district congregate. From our earlier tour of 1979 and of May 1982 we had already compiled a list of *devatās*.

Fig. k. Chhatradi. Location of the temples (not to scale).



This year Śivarātri fell on February 13 (14 Phal-guna Vadi 2039) and the fair lasted for some ten days (February 11-20). At Mandi, it was attended by only forty-seven *rathas*, which is one-third of the attendance of some years ago. With very few exceptions, all the *mohras* are quite new, ranging from 1861 to 1982, most of them dating from the past twenty years and bearing all the marks of a dried up, dull and stereotyped workmanship with no aesthetic value. Most are of the Kullu B type in silver or gilded copper *repoussé* work.

..... As noticed during the previous tour, a Bengali iconographic feature was recently introduced with *mohras* of Kālī with a very heavy protruding tongue, and even an embossed plate of a four-armed standing Kālī in the Cāmuṇḍā *ratha* of Drang. Other such images of Kālī were seen on the road between Mandi and Jogindernagar. Several times we were given spontaneous confirmation that old *mohras* were melted into new ones. Recent *mohras* are evidently embossed on a common basic mould.

Fig. 438. Fountain stone, Chhatradi.



The *rathas* and the distribution of the *mohras* differ from those in the Kullu fair where the masks were generally arranged in superposed rows of two to four on a trapezoidal slope. The general trend was to emphasize height and frontage.

The *rathas* at Mandi are of strikingly smaller dimensions and rarely carry more than eight masks. Most have either four or eight *mohras* disposed in one or two rows. The masks are secured one by one to the four faces of a cubic structure supporting a kind of dome stuffed with yak hair. Where a brass cast mask occurs, it is, as a rule, located in the front lower row. The fairs of Kullu and Mandi are reciprocally exclusive: no *ratha* attending Kullu will be present at the Mandi fair, and conversely.

..... The first impression was a disappointment as compared to what we had seen in Kullu, and this feeling increased with time.

Although fresh arrivals of *rathas* were expected, one had the feeling that the basic motivation of the fair was commercial and that its focus was in the bazaar near the palace. There was a lack of genuine pomp and authenticity, and but few people seemed to be really involved with any religious feeling.

Fig. 439. Method of house construction, Chhatradi.



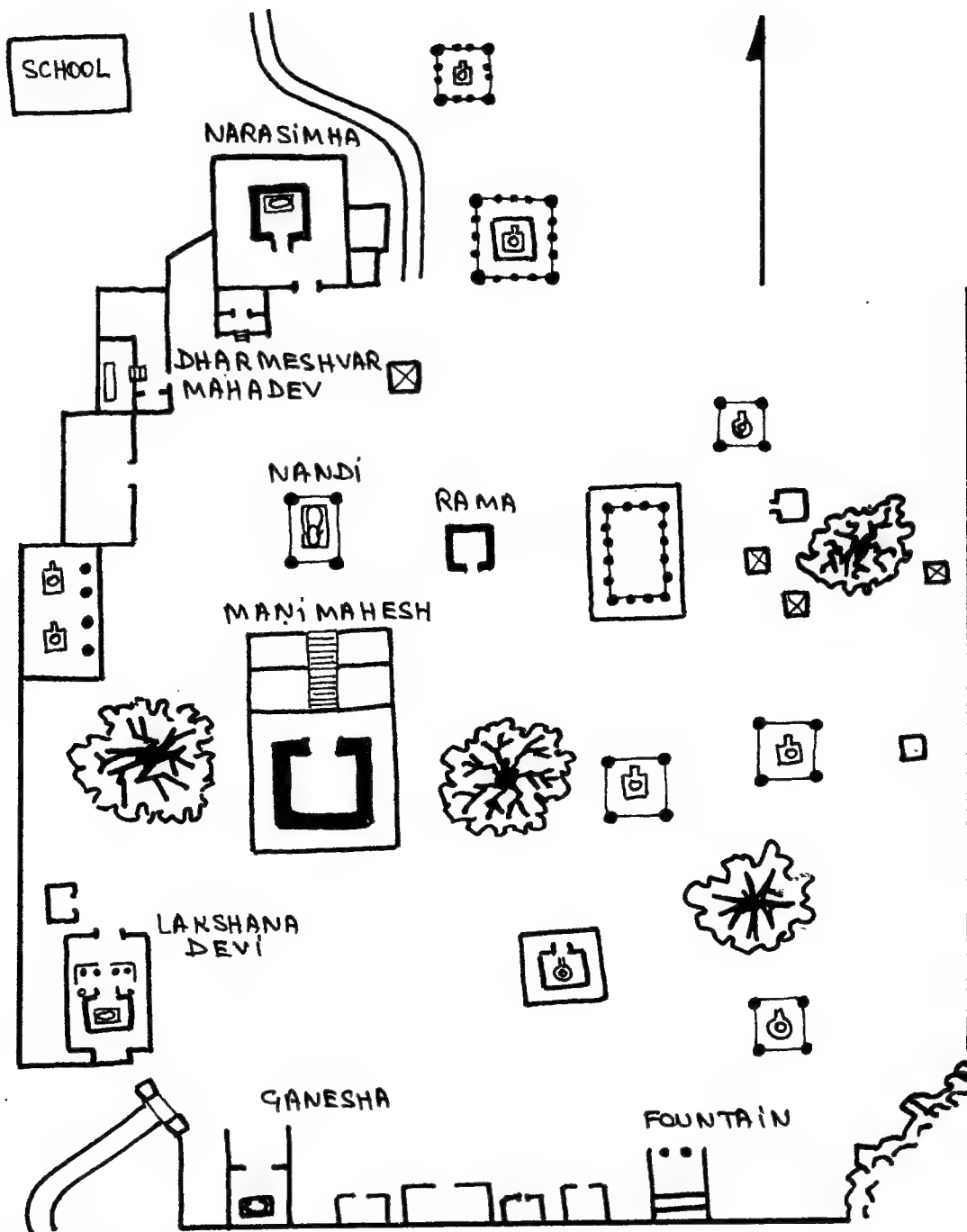


Fig. j. Bharmaur. Location of the temples (not to scale).



Only a few stalls were gathered in a corner of the parade ground. Unlike the Kullu fair, that of Mandi evinces a folklore as dead as tribal dresses in a museum display-case.

The underlying meaning of the Mandi fair is quite similar to that of Kullu: village *devatās* gather to pay feudal homage to their lord, Veṇugopāla, worshipped in the temple next to the palace, a ceremonial which reflects the ancient feudatory links on which the Mandi state was based.

..... The winter was particularly severe this year and the contrast with the last trimester of '82 was striking: grass and vegetation almost burnt by frost, dried rivers and lakes (Bilaspur's lake was almost empty, and the temples were on a dry bed). An unusual number of blackbirds and crested bullfinches thronged the roads to get some food. Heavy rains fell on H.P. and Harayana in February: traces of local floods and many landslides were encountered. We had heavy rain from 13th noon

up to the 15th evening with only a few intermissions so that the roads and tracks leading to temples we were likely to visit, were cut off or impracticable.

..... At Mehar, 16 km. from Mandi, we inspected the shrine of Nagni, the snake goddess. Her masks have opted out of the Śivarātri fair this time. The "totem" pole has now been painted black; in May 1982 it had the natural colour of wood.

### Tour of Kullu, Kalpa etc. April 19 to 28, 1983

..... We proceeded towards Rampur and beyond in the Kinnaur district, to inspect some temples reported in Mian Goverdhan Singh's latest book. Seven km. ahead of Powari, we found our road blocked by an avalanche of snow, which was 100 metre wide. It had descended from the hill on our right, covered the road, then, spanning the

Fig. 440. Landslide on the road to Chhatradi.

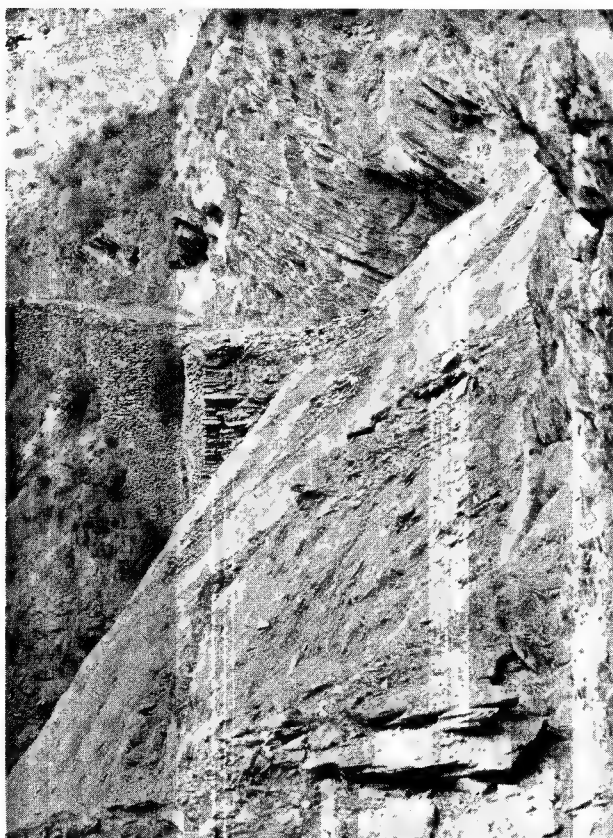
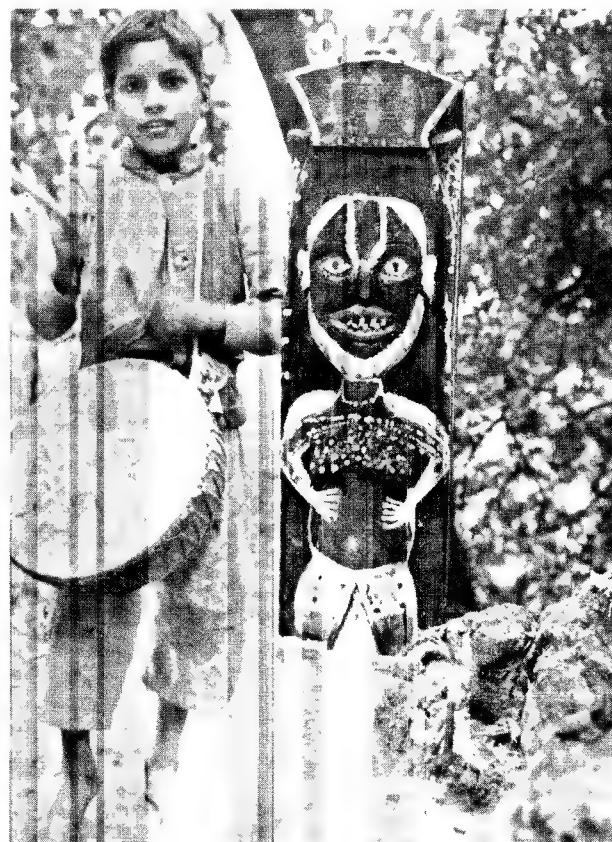


Fig. 441. Wooden totem pole in front of Nagni's shrine, Mehar, Mandi.



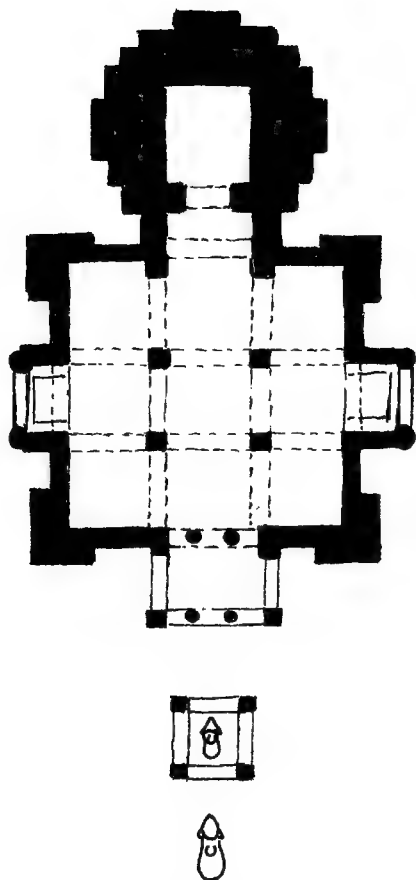


Fig. 1. Baijnath. The Vaidyanātha temple (not to scale).

entire width of the Sutlej, it rested against the side of the hill across the river. The height of the snow from road level was about 10 m. and it must have been over 20 m. from the river level. It must have temporarily dammed up the flow of water; but, water, being a little warmer than snow, had melted that part of the snow which came into contact with it, forming a tunnel as it were, which still bridged the two banks. This debris was being cleared away by an army bulldozer, and we had to wait for two or three hours before we could attempt to cross it. We reached Peo and took up quarters in the Police Rest House.

Before Wangtu, a minor road branches away from the highway towards Nichar where, as Francke reported in his *Antiquities of Indian Tibet I*, there are wooden temples of Uṣā, but Nichar was not on our programme this time.

## KALPA

On April 24 we proceeded to Kalpa to inspect the Chhabo Narayan temple. It is a rather modern shrine. A meeting was taking place there, and eight or nine *mohras* were mounted on the *ratha*. They were of brass, and all quite modern. Kalpa was thus disappointing, but its importance lies in the fact that mask worship prevails so far east.

## KOTHI

From Kalpa we proceeded to Kothi, which is between Peo and Kalpa on a detour of some three km. The Durgā temple, facing east, is built of stone slabs alternating with wooden beams. Inside the temple are two *rathas* with silver and brass *mohras* of varying dates, none very old, as far as we could judge standing outside the locked doors. We were informed that a fair was to be held on August 15 (corresponding to the 7th of the bright half of Srāvaṇa).

..... On our way back to Karchham, we saw telephone poles uprooted and wires broken for several km. at a stretch. Arriving at Sarahan, we approached the authorities of the Bhīmākālī temple, but they gave the same negative answer as the last time to our request for photography. In the lower sanctum, we saw four silver *mohras*, quite late, and one, rather large, silver *mohra* about 30 cm. high, which is old. One more mask of yellow metal with a serpent on the chest may also be reasonably old.

In the upper sanctum, there are about one dozen brass images, but all wear red garments up to their ears. They include one folk-type Gaṇeśa and some Nirmand-type Maḥiṣamardinīs.

## BEHENA

..... At Ani we contacted a *gramsevak* who accompanied us to Behena, and fortunately this time the villagers allowed us a few minutes of photography.

..... Fifteen brass *mohras* and one large bust were photographed from outside the sanctum, as the villagers would not allow us to enter, nor would they themselves go in to bring out the masks or even move the chandelier out of the way.

..... On April 26, we set out for Hatkoti. The metallised road of some 100 km. from Nogli via Rohru was blocked, therefore, we had to drive down to Theog and then journey to Hatkoti via Kharapathar. The *pujari* was stubborn and objected to any photographs, even to the use of the torch when the lights failed, and when we made a sketch of the plinth mouldings, he looked on with suspicion.

### Tour of Kullu July 13 to 24, 1983

We undertook the present tour in Kullu district to visit the following: the Kahi-ka fair at Basauna; the Trijugi Narayan Viṣṇu temple at Diyar; the Adī-Brahmā temple at Khokhan; and the newly found early wooden sculptures in Gajan.

#### DIYAR

..... As you gain height, the scenery becomes more and more beautiful, with *kail* trees in every direction. Diyar is some 600 metres above the Bhuntar-Bhuin road or 1,700 to 1,800 metres above the sea; the *deodar*, whose habitat starts from around 1,800 to 1,900 metres, appears in the vicinity, which confirms the estimate of the height. The village is on a ridge which commands the west and south-west of the valley, and the Mandi hills beyond, threaded by the old route via Uttarsal. (Later while travelling on the Kullu-Simla highway, we were able to spot the grey roofs of the Diyar temple in the distance, on our left, for some five kilometres before and after Bajaura.)

..... In the cella there is a late metal image of 30 cm. height of the Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā*, here worshipped as Trijugi Narayan, as also four or five more Buddhist and a few Brahmanical images. The masks, kept in a *bhandar* to the south of the main shrine, will be opened during a Kahi-ka fair on the Devāśayanī Ekādaśī next year, when Viṣṇu's sister Bhagavatī of Ninna and some other gods will arrive. Trijugi Narayan, being a superior god, does not attend the Kullu *Dussehra*.

..... Afterwards we went to Basauna on the left bank of the Beas from Bhuntar and then to the *bhandar* of Kapilamuni where the Kahi-ka ceremony was to take place about two km. further away.

Last year, most of the old silver masks were melted down and four large masks were cast which now adorn the top of the *ratha*. At the bottom is Kapilamuni's only surviving silver mask with an inscription of three or four lines; the name of *mahārājā* Mān Singh could be read, but some villagers were suspicious and angry, and made it impossible to work.

..... The mask is strikingly similar to Brahmā's inscribed mask in Khokhan, having the same chinless face and exactly the same moustache, eyes and eyebrows, but the moustache and eyebrows are gilded. Man Singh was on the Kullu throne from 1688 to 1719 A.D. and, thus, Kapilamuni's mask may be only a little earlier than Brahmā's.

When the Kahi-ka ceremony is held, a man of the Nad caste is made to drink ceremonial water with which the masks have been washed. As a result he loses consciousness. Afterwards, *mantras* are chanted, the man comes back to "life". Until a few years ago the victim used to be physically beaten or stabbed in order to make him faint which sometimes resulted in his death.

### Tour of Kullu, Simla etc. May 10 to 30, 1984

..... On the 19th we called on the Deputy Commissioner of Kullu. We explained to him that we often experienced lack of co-operation from the villagers, and requested him for a letter of instructions to his subordinate revenue official, as we wished to explore certain sensitive areas. The DC's contention was that temples are public property and anyone is free to visit them, but we replied that although theoretically this was so, our practical experience was to the contrary. We did not succeed even after much persuasion. We concluded, therefore, that we had to rely only on friendly and informal support.

..... We proceeded to Nirmand, where Mr. Mohinder Parkash had agreed to conduct us to Sarahan in Kullu district (not to be confused with the village of the same name in Simla). Mr. Mohinder Parkash showed us a sculpture embedded in the wall of a chamber facing the Ambikā temple, which was faintly visible. After obtaining the priest's

consent, the wall surface around the sculpture was cleared, which exposed a beautiful sixth or seventh century carving (56×37 cm.) of a *vyāla* prancing on a prostrate figure. On the back of the *vyāla* is a dancing *gana*. A much eroded panel, also of the sixth-seventh century, is embedded in the wall of a house in the village.

..... To recapitulate, the antiquity of Nirmand is proved by the copper-plate of Samudrasena which has been dated on a palaeographic basis to the sixth-seventh century, and also because a Mahārāja Śarva is mentioned therein as king, who may be the same as the Maukhari king Śarvavarman of Kanauj who reigned from circa 565 to 580 A.D. The number of sculptures so far seen by us which provide concrete evidence of a sixth-seventh century age for Nirmand is indeed impressive.

..... Mr. Mohinder Parkash gave us the disturbing news that just one week before our visit, the bronze Devī from the sanctum of the Khekshu temple in Kullu district on the right bank of the Sutlej was stolen. It would be seen from our earlier reports that the same image had been stolen once before, but was luckily recovered. When we told Mr. Mohinder Parkash of our intention to visit the Shamsheer Mahadeva temple in the vicinity of Khekshu, he strongly advised against this, which advice we took and cancelled the visit to the right bank of the Sutlej.

..... At Randal, we contacted the *kardar* of the temple, who sent us to another village about half a km. away where the *mohras* are located. A meeting was held of the village elders, but while some were willing to let us see the *mohras*, the most important person, in whose house the *mohras* are kept, was very vehement in rejecting our request and told us off in no uncertain terms. Clearly, the time was not opportune (also in view of the recent theft) and we returned to Rampur by another route which took 1 hour 15 minutes, and reached Nirmand at six in the evening.

### Tour of Kullu August 17 to 22, 1984

..... When we visited Karjan in May 1984, we had noticed nine silver inscribed *mohras* of the twin

goddess Docā-Mocā at Karjan-Gajan. Shri Polo Ram, the priest, and Prof. Tara Chand indicated that these masks could be photographed at the end of the fair in July-August. Thereafter, Professor Thakur wrote to us to visit Karjan between August 15 and 20. Accordingly, we reached Karjan on the 17th afternoon and contacted Professor Thakur.

As per our programme, we visited Sajla in the morning of the 18th. There are nine silver and brass *mohras* on the *ratha* and some of the silver *mohras* are inscribed. According to their *kardar* some lines are inscribed on a sheet which is mounted on the *ratha*, but which could not be photographed for the present. The largest silver *mohra* of Viṣṇu has inscriptions in three characters. Detailed photographs could perhaps be taken on the 21st (however, as it turned out, no detailed photography was possible).

Afterwards, we proceeded to Karjan on foot (as there was no conveyance) and called on Shri Polo Ram at around 10 a.m., the idea being to proceed to Soyel, about two km. towards Naggar, along with the Karjan goddesses, who were to attend a fair at that place.

..... On the 21st, at 7.30 a.m., we visited Karjan to study the nine silver *mohras* of the twin goddess — our principal aim of this tour. Shri Polo Ram and others were very co-operative, and displayed all their masks one by one, and they were photographed. Their inscriptions are yet to be deciphered, but the oldest appear to be about three to four centuries old.

### Tour of Bharmaur, Chhatradi, Masrur September 4 to 8, 1984

..... When we visited Chhatradi in July 1984 the villagers had shown us two or three large wooden masks properly so called, complete with eyeholes. These masks represent (anonymous ?) demons and have a part in an annual ritual, when the ancient myth of the miracle of Śaktidevī is re-enacted. Before Śaktidevī arrived in this territory, these demons held sway here. Śaktidevī vanquished them and banished them forever. This adventure of the goddess is played out every year when villagers wearing the masks dance in the com-



pound of the temple. It would be interesting to witness this dance and see what connections it has with the Lamaistic devil dance. Also, this tradition appears to be unique in Brahmanical religion in the Himalayas. Therefore, we decided to visit Chhatradi and document the proceedings on the day scheduled for the dance, September 5, and arrived in Chamba on the 4th evening.

On enquiry with the temple committee members, who were also participating in these dances, we were told that the date of September 5 given earlier had been advanced to the September 3 in accordance with the Mañi-Maheśa fair and that no devil dance would take place on the 5th. Shri Puran Chand Sharma, school teacher, said he had addressed a letter to us, but it never arrived. However, we obtained a description: six men of the village don these masks and dance in the compound. Villagers harass them by beating them with poisonous plants known as "scorpion leaves". The devils fight with the villagers, then go round the temple three times symbolizing their subjection and the dance is terminated. Though we could not witness the dance itself, we managed to photograph all the six masks

before they were put away for next year's performance. The three largest of these are 35-40 cm. and the smallest about 20-25 cm. All these are thickly covered with vermilion, but the earliest of them with puffy cheeks, bulbous nose and a frown overshadowing the entire countenance are not very different from the old Himalayan masks.

The images of Śaktidevī and others had been adorned for the festival. We wished to photograph even the rear view of Śaktidevī, but because more than a thousand people were present, many of them drunk, this was not possible. The priests told us that ornaments are brought from the treasury at Chamba for this festival and it would not be proper to touch the figures, but we photographed the garmented figures of the Devī, the two Yakṣīs, the bronzes of Mahiṣamardini, Gaurī-Śaṅkara, Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, and the large male bust in a hurry, using our flash before any opposition could develop.

The attendant of the ASI kindly allowed us to use his room with a single bed for the night. During the night, we witnessed some drunken brawls.

*Key to the numbers on the diagram: Fig. a.*

1. Jarunag, Tonan; 2. Chambu, Kasholigad; 3. Brahmaji, Khokhan; 4. Nainadevi, Phati Bhulang; 5. Gauri Bir Nath, Junal Rajgir; 6. Narpal, Maul; 7. Isvar Mahadev, Bunjar; 8. Siripal; 9. Kālī, Ūdī, Shirath; 10. Bhagavati Archhandika, Manali; 11. Narayan, Chhaman; 12. Jvani Mahadev, Jvani, Neoli; 13. Bir Nath, Bari; 14. Tripurasundari, Naggar; 15. Ugra Tara Bhagavati, Naggar; 16. Jamdagni, Chakenani Kullu; 17. Dhara ki Chamunda; 18. Shaprada Narayan, Budogi; 19. Sidhbhaga Devi, Nrogi (Bhuntar-Jari Road); 20. Pirdu Than, Pirdi; 21. Jvalamukhi, Shamshi; 22. Suraj Pal, Bhuntar; 23. Shesh Nag, near Larji; 24. Shyamakali, Dalasni; 25. Rishi Garga, Sachani; 26. Devta Gada Durga, Bandal; 27. Lagesri Mahadev, Pekhdi; 28. Brahma, Kanaun; 29. Aidu Nag; 30. Mangalesvar Mahadev, Chhyanvar; 31. Lakshmi-Narayan, Balhan, Kothi Balhan, near Sainj; 32. Lakshmi-Narayan, Rahla; 33. Kamla, Gohi; 34. Ashapuri, Dhalyara; 35. Markandeya, Mangalaur; 36. Bijli Mahadev, Tharman; 37. Bhagavati Dasmi Barda, Kothi Kayas; 38. Vasuki Nag, Thate Bir Gopalpur; 39. Shesh Nag, Badagram; 40. to 45. did not supply information; 46. Gargi Rishi, Lasni.

*Key to the numbers on the diagram: Fig. i.*

A,B,C,D Levels.

1. Pillar with Garuḍa in front of the entry; 2. Front maṇḍapa of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple (16th-17th century); 3. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple; 4. Shri Mahavir temple; 5. Mahākālī shrine with maṇḍapa and tank; 6. Radha Krishna temple (1828); 7. Candragupta temple; 8. Three small shrines; 9. Tank; 10. Gauri-Śaṅkara temple with early eleventh century Gauri-Śaṅkara group; 11. Mahadev temple with marble caturmukhalinga; 12. Tryambakeshvar temple also named Trimukh (ca 1575); 13. Lakṣmī-Dāmodara temple; 14. Pillar with Garuḍa; 15. Devakūṭa; 16 and 17. Small shrines, with marble Caturānana in 17; 18. Shrine; 19. Dharmashala.

	<i>Sujunidevi</i> 12 July 1026 A.D.  Fig. 408	<i>Śākyamuni</i>  Fig. 411	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i>  Fig. 412	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i> 1500 A.D.  Fig. 413	<i>Hidimbā</i> <i>temple</i> <i>Manali</i>  Fig. 414	<i>Silver mohra</i> <i>with</i> <i>two records</i> <i>1st record</i>  Fig. 415	<i>Silver mohra</i> <i>with</i> <i>two records</i> <i>2nd record</i>  Fig. 416	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i>  Fig. 417
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	<i>Śujunīdevī</i> 12 July 1026 A.D.  Fig. 408	<i>Śākyamuni</i>  Fig. 411	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i>  Fig. 412	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i> 1500 A.D.  Fig. 413	<i>Hidimbā</i> <i>temple</i> <i>Manali</i>  Fig. 414	<i>Silver mohra</i> <i>with</i> <i>two records</i> <i>1st record</i>  Fig. 415	<i>Silver mohra</i> <i>with</i> <i>two records</i> <i>2nd record</i>  Fig. 416	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i>  Fig. 417
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Silver mohra  Fig. 418	Lion collar inscription Mehla  Fig. 419	Silver mohra Karjan  Fig. 420	Silver mohra Khokhan Śāstra 22, 1746 A.D.  Fig. 421	Silver mohra Karjan  Fig. 422	Silver mohra Karjan  Fig. 423	Barsela of Babir Sen Mandi  Fig. 424	Barsela of Bhavani Sen  Fig. 425
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	<i>Śujunīdevī</i> 12 July 1026 A.D.  Fig. 408	<i>Śākyamuni</i>  Fig. 411	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i>  Fig. 412	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i> 1500 A.D.  Fig. 413	<i>Hidimbā</i> <i>temple</i> <i>Manali</i>  Fig. 414	<i>Silver mohra</i> <i>with</i> <i>two records</i> <i>1st record</i>  Fig. 415	<i>Silver mohra</i> <i>with</i> <i>two records</i> <i>2nd record</i>  Fig. 416	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i>  Fig. 417
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Silver mohra  Fig. 418	Lion collar inscription Mehla  Fig. 419	Silver mohra Karjan  Fig. 420	Silver mohra Khokhan Śāstra 22, 1746 A.D.  Fig. 421	Silver mohra Karjan  Fig. 422	Silver mohra Karjan  Fig. 423	Barsela of Balbir Sen Mandi  Fig. 424	Barsela of Bhavani Sen  Fig. 425
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	<i>Śujunīdevī</i> 12 July 1026 A.D.  Fig. 408	<i>Śākyamuni</i>  Fig. 411	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i>  Fig. 412	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i> 1500 A.D.  Fig. 413	<i>Hidimbā</i> <i>temple</i> <i>Manali</i>  Fig. 414	<i>Silver mohra</i> <i>with</i> <i>two records</i> <i>1st record</i>  Fig. 415	<i>Silver mohra</i> <i>with</i> <i>two records</i> <i>2nd record</i>  Fig. 416	<i>Silver</i> <i>mohra</i>  Fig. 417
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<i>Silver mohra</i>	<i>Lion collar inscription Mehla</i>	<i>Silver mohra Karjan</i>	<i>Silver mohra Khokhan Śāstra 22, 1746 A.D.</i>	<i>Silver mohra Karjan</i>	<i>Silver mohra Karjan</i>	<i>Barsela of Balbir Sen Mandi</i>	<i>Barsela of Bhavani Sen</i>
<i>Fig. 418</i>	<i>Fig. 419</i>	<i>Fig. 420</i>	<i>Fig. 421</i>	<i>Fig. 422</i>	<i>Fig. 423</i>	<i>Fig. 424</i>	<i>Fig. 425</i>
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## GLOSSARY

<i>abhaya</i>	gesture indicating "no fear"	<i>navanābhamaṇḍapa,</i>	a hall having four pillars around a
<i>añjali</i>	folded hands	<i>navaraṅgamaṇḍapa</i>	central square area, and twelve
<i>avatāra</i>	incarnation		more pillars on the periphery, thus
<i>avyaṅga</i>	waist cord, of Iranian origin		having nine squares in all
<i>bhandar</i>	store-house; our context, a temple	<i>paraśu</i>	axe
	store house where <i>mohras</i> and	<i>prabhā, prabhāvali</i>	halo
	other temple equipment are kept	<i>praṇāla</i>	spout on the pedestal of an image, to
<i>bhaṅga</i>	bend of a person's body (posture)		drain off water
<i>caitya</i>	a Buddhist funeral mound	<i>prāsāda</i>	temple, palace
<i>campaka</i>	a flower, Michelia Campaka	<i>ratha</i>	a wooden frame on which <i>mohras</i> are
<i>candraśālā</i>	arched niche		mounted, see Figs. 282, 283.
<i>devakoṣṭha</i>	niche for divine images on a temple wall	<i>rekhānāgara</i>	curvilinear superstructure of a north
<i>dharmacakra-</i>	gesture expressing the Buddha's		Indian temple
<i>pravartanamudrā</i>	"setting the Wheel of the Law into	<i>śākhā</i>	frame (of a door)
	Motion"	<i>śikhara</i>	superstructure of a temple
<i>dhattūra</i>	a flower, the white thorn apple,	<i>śrīvatsa</i>	a symbol on Viṣṇu's breast
	Datura Alba	<i>stambha</i>	pillar
<i>dvārapāla</i>	door guardian	<i>śukanāsa</i>	"parrot's beak"; superstructure of a
<i>ekāvali</i>	single stringed necklace of pearls		temple's vestibule, so called
<i>gaṇa</i>	an attendant of Siva, usually a dwarf	<i>tilaka</i>	because of its arched form
<i>gandharva</i>	a semi-divine being	<i>toraṇa</i>	forehead mark
<i>garbhagṛha</i>	sanctum		ornamental free standing structure at
<i>kakṣāsana</i>	seat, a long bench along the wall of a	<i>tribhaṅga</i>	the head of a temple, stupa, etc.
	temple	<i>trikaṇṭaka</i>	body posture suggesting a triple bend
<i>kapāla</i>	a human skull	<i>trivali</i>	a crown with three pointed elements
<i>kardar</i>	temple manager		triple fold skin on the waist or neck, a
<i>kīcaka</i>	atlantes (singular)	<i>udgama</i>	mark of feminine beauty
<i>kinnara</i>	a semi-divine being		ornate superstructure of a niche on a
<i>kiriṭa</i>	tall crown, especially of Viṣṇu,	<i>vaijāyanti-mālā</i>	temple's wall
	Sūrya, etc.	<i>varada</i>	thick long garland
<i>kīrtimukha</i>	a leonine face, a universal motif in	<i>vedikā</i>	gesture indicating blessing
	Indian art	<i>vidyādhara</i>	railing
<i>lalāṭabimba</i>	a frieze in the centre of a door lintel	<i>vyāla</i>	a semi-divine being
<i>lalitāsana</i>	relaxed sitting position, one leg	<i>upavīta</i>	a hybrid animal
	folded on the seat, the other	<i>uṣṇīsa</i>	the Brahmanical sacred thread
	hanging down	<i>uttariya</i>	cranial protuberance of the Buddha
<i>makara</i>	crocodile		scarf, upper garment (usually
<i>maṇḍapa</i>	hall	<i>yakṣa</i>	unstitched)
<i>mātulaṅga</i>	a fruit with a hard scaly skin	<i>yakṣī</i>	a semi-divine being (female)
<i>mithuna</i>	a pair of a man and a woman; an	<i>yantra</i>	mystical diagram
	auspicious motif	<i>yogāsana</i>	cross-legged sitting posture
<i>mohra</i>	"mask", face of a divinity		
<i>mukhamaṇḍapa</i>	frontal hall		





## Index

### A

Ādi-Brahmā 25, 28-29, 257  
 Āditya 86  
 Ādityavarman 29-30, 42  
 Ādivarman 30  
 Afghanistan 80, 85, 87, 89, 104, 188  
 Agroha 62, 64-65  
 Ajanta 93, 95  
 Ajbar Sen 34  
 Ājyavarman 30  
 Aklu 33  
 Akṣobhya (-Vajrasattva) 86, 88  
 Alchi 87, 89-90  
 Amara 30  
 Amara Pāl 26  
 Ambikā 59  
 Ambikā temple 62, 225  
 Amoghabhūti 18  
 Anāṅgadevī 85, 252  
 Ananta 31  
 Anī 8, 15  
 Annapūrṇā 70  
 Ardhanārī 61  
 Arjuna 17  
 Aryan 12, 83, 157, 167, 182, 185, 237, 240, 243, 246  
 Āryanandivikramāditya 86, 254  
 Āryanandivikramādityanandi 252  
 Āsaṭavarman 30-31  
 Asiknī, Akisenes 11  
 Aśoka 17-18  
 Aṣṭādhyāyī 17-18  
 Aurangabad 93  
 Aut 16  
 Avalokiteśvara 193, 242  
 Avantipur 68

### B

Badarīdās 256  
 Bahadur Singh 13, 24, 27-28, 255  
 Bahu Sen 34  
 Baijnath 4, 9, 38, 99, 114-115  
 Bail 127, 180-181, 191, 193, 195, 199, 202, 227, 232  
 Bajaura 4, 12-13, 22, 25, 27, 37, 39-40, 59, 62, 64-65, 69,  
 99-100, 105, 155, 211, 220  
 Bajpai, K.D. 64

Balabhadravarma 32  
 Balarāma 61, 63  
 Balavarman 29-30, 42  
 Balbir Sen 35-36, 259  
 Bāṇa 20-21  
 Bangahal 13-14, 25-28  
 Banjar 14  
*Bansavali* 24-27, 29-31  
 Ban Sen 202  
 Bara Bangahal 28, 33  
 Baragaon 127  
 Baralacha Pass 11  
 Bara Shigri Glacier 11, 15, 151  
*barselas* 36  
 Basauna 25, 28  
 Basisht 227  
 Baṭlu 256  
 Baṭula 117  
 Beas 3, 5, 7-8, 11-14, 16-19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 34, 65, 80, 105,  
 127-128, 134, 140, 150-151, 156-161, 163-164, 166, 170,  
 179-180, 197-199, 202-203, 205-207, 209-214, 217-218,  
 220-221, 227, 229, 231-234  
 Behena 6, 8, 127, 180, 188-189, 191-192, 195-196, 202, 227  
 Berlin 6, 185, 193  
 Bhādarlu 195  
 Bhaga 11-12, 26, 32  
*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 17-18  
 Bhairavi 89  
 Bhalai 33  
*bhandar* 4, 5, 8, 62, 127, 227  
 Bhaṇḍi 22  
 Bharmaur 3-4, 11, 23, 28-31, 40-46, 59, 69, 83, 86, 93-97,  
 121-122, 249  
 Bhavani Sen 36, 259  
*Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* 18  
 Bhogamatī 31  
 Bhog Pāl 25  
 Bhūdevī 111  
 Bhuin 34  
 Bhunda festival 123, 250  
 Bhuntar 13, 27-28, 160, 218  
 Bhū Pāl 26  
 Bhuri Singh Museum 106, 115-121, 125, 168, 214-215, 217,  
 238, 241, 246  
 Bhūtanātha 226  
 Bhuvanalakṣmī 90  
 Bidhi Singh 28

Bihangamani Pāl 24-25  
 Bihar 80, 90, 129, 139, 193, 206  
 Bijai Sen 36  
 Bijli Mahadeva 81  
 Bikram Singh 25, 28  
 Bilaspur 14, 127  
 Bodhisattva 104  
 Brahmā 42, 68, 75, 83, 119  
*Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 17, 23-24  
 Brahmāṇī 65, 222  
 Brahma Pāl 25  
 Brahmapura 11, 23, 26, 28-30, 40, 42, 44, 46  
 Brāhmī 18-19, 249  
 Brahm. ze 83  
*Bṛhatsamhitā* 17-19  
 British Museum 104  
 Buddha Prakash 85  
 Buddhi 243  
 Bushahr 26, 28

## C

Cakrāyudha 22  
 Calukya 89, 95, 227  
 Campā 29-30  
 Campāvati 31, 124-125  
 Cāmūṇḍā 122  
 Cāmūṇḍā temple 180  
 Caṇḍeśvarahastin 20, 23  
 Candragupta Maurya 17  
 Candragupta I 19  
 Candragupta II 19  
 Candragupteśvara 31  
 Caturānana 75, 90, 100-101, 116-117  
 Caturānanamūrti 42  
 Central Asia 12, 38, 80, 83-85, 87, 89, 94-96, 102-104, 109, 153  
 Chamba 3, 5, 7, 11, 24-26, 29-33, 40-46, 69-71, 75, 80-81, 83-85, 88-90, 92-93, 95-97, 99-102, 104-111, 113, 115-128, 134, 140, 151-153, 155-156, 160-161, 164, 168, 171, 173, 175, 179-180, 182, 186-187, 214-215, 217, 236, 238, 241-244, 246, 249-252, 256  
 Chamba-Brahmapura 30  
 Chamba-Kashmir 40  
 Chamba-Lahaul 127  
 Chamba Museum 124  
 Chambu temple 206, 209, 211, 233  
 Chambus 183  
 Chandra 11-12  
 Chandrabhaga 11-12, 32  
 Charhat Singh 33  
 Chatradi 11, 23, 29-30, 40, 42, 44-47, 69-75, 86-87, 89, 93, 95-97, 100-101, 106, 111, 180, 185, 236, 242, 249  
 Chawhar 28  
 Chenab 11  
 Chet Sen 25  
 Chetwode, Penelope 5  
 Chhabra, B. Ch. 29  
 Chhatar Singh 32  
 China 12, 85, 87, 104, 206  
 Chinese Buddhism 87

Chinese Turkestan 87  
 Chinnamastakā 122, 182  
 Chobia Pass 151  
 Chuhar 14  
 Chur Range 15  
 Crafts Museum, Delhi 213, 236, 240-241, 246

## D

Dadla Ghat 218  
 Dagdhavarman 31  
 Dakṣeśvara 192  
 Dalel Singh 33  
 Daṇḍi 66, 68  
 Daradadeśa 84  
 Dardistan 85, 87  
 Das, S.C. 83  
 Dashmi Barda 229  
 Deo Tibba 151  
 Devapāla 22  
 Devāśeṣa 24, 47, 249, 254  
 Devaśrī 86  
*devatās* 5, 6, 8, 10, 24, 179, 233, 249  
 Devavarman 30  
 Devirikothi 31, 32  
 Dharaghoṣa 19  
 Dharamsala 32  
 Dharitri Pāl 27  
 Dharmapāla 22  
 Dharmaśāṅkhasamādhi Mañjuśrī 108  
 Dhaula Dhar Range 11, 14, 28, 151  
 Dhropa 232  
 Dhruva 22  
 Dhungri-Manali 24, 27  
 Dhuval 24  
 Diddā 86-87, 253  
*Dīpavamsa* 18  
 Diserens, Mrs. H. 69  
 Divākaravarman 29-30, 42  
 Docā-Mocā 66, 227  
 Dodakavarman 31  
 Dundubhisarā 18  
 Durgā 29, 32, 37-39, 42, 63, 75, 90, 101, 104, 106, 108, 114, 116, 119, 121, 128, 133-134, 139-141, 143-144, 146-151, 153-154, 158-159, 161, 163-169, 173, 176, 219, 235, 237, 243-245, 256  
*Dussehra* 5, 8, 28, 154, 180-182, 196-199, 202-203, 229, 231, 233-234.

## E

Eillenberg, Prof. S. 169  
 Ellsworth, R.H. 252, 254

## F

fake 9, 79, 143, 164, 172, 235-237, 239, 242-246  
 fakers 79, 164, 219, 236, 239, 241-246  
 Figiel, Dr. Leo 120, 140, 146, 148, 150, 158, 161, 169-170, 172, 175-176  
 Francke, A.H. 145

## G

- Gadh Suraj 197-198  
 Gaja-Lakṣmī 47  
 Gajan (Gazan) 40, 65-67, 69  
 Gambhīra Pāl 27  
 Gandhāras 19-21  
 Gaṇeśa 23, 29-30, 37-39, 42, 44, 64, 74-75, 86, 93, 96-97, 102, 107, 116, 128, 130, 133-134, 138-139, 146, 150-151, 153, 155-157, 170, 172, 176, 240, 243-244, 246  
 Gaṇeśa Pāl 26  
 Gaṇeśavarman 32  
 Ganga (Ganges) 21, 38-39, 42, 206  
 Garga Ṛṣi 233  
 Garsa 13, 27  
 Garuḍa 41, 43, 75, 90, 100, 108-109, 115, 117-118, 139, 145, 151, 153, 160, 161, 167, 171, 174-176, 219, 240-241, 246  
 Gauri-Śaṅkara 37, 63, 73, 102, 105-107, 117-118, 123 251  
 Gaurīśvara 31  
 Gautama Buddha 253  
 Gayatri (Gayatridevī) 63, 154  
 Gehra 11  
 Ghamand Chand 28, 33-34  
 Ghoghar Dhar Range 14  
 Gilgit (Gilgitta) 80, 84-88, 90, 103-105, 145, 188, 235, 250, 252-254  
 Gobind Singh 34  
 Godhāniya 84  
 Goetz, H. 4, 30, 93, 103, 113, 115-116, 152, 242  
 Gokhale, Dr. (Mrs.) S. 255  
 Gopal Singh 33  
 Govardhana 26, 60, 62  
 Goverdhan Singh, Mian 116  
 Govinda 256  
 Grahavarman 21  
 Gugga 23, 42, 44, 95-97  
 Guler 120, 122  
 Gum 30  
 Gupta 43, 45-46, 59, 62-65, 68-69, 90, 92, 94, 129, 185-186, 197, 205  
 Gurjara-Pratihāra 23  
 Gutkar 234  
 Gya-mur-Orr 25-26

## H

- Hamīr Pāl 25  
 Haṁsa 222  
 Haradas 25  
 Harappa 185  
 Harcourt, A. F. P. 153  
 Hari-Hara 163-164  
 Hari Rai 100-101, 236  
 Hārītī-Hiḍimbā 182  
 Harṣa (Harṣavardhana) 20-21, 30-31  
*Harṣacarita* 20-21  
 Haryana 62, 64  
 Hasta Pāl 26  
 Hastin 20

- Hat-Bajaura 24, 69  
 Hatkoti 15  
 Hatun 85-86, 252, 254  
 Hemaprakaśa 123, 250-251  
 Heramba 92, 102  
 Hiḍimbā (Hirma) 3-4, 7, 24, 27, 29, 115-118, 180, 226, 249, 255  
 Himādrī 40  
 Hiuen-Tsang 19, 21, 153  
 Huṇa/s 19-22, 80, 85  
 Hurang 13  
 Hurla 13, 27  
 Hunza 85

## I

- Indo-Tibetan Bronzes* 84  
 Indra 67  
 Indra Pāl 27  
 Indraprastha 26  
 Indrāyudha 22  
 Indus 80, 84, 145, 185  
 Irāvati 11,  
 Īśānavarman 20-21  
 Ishvari Sen 34-35  
 Īśvarahastin 20

## J

- Jagat Singh 24, 28, 32, 229  
 Jagatsukh 24-25, 27, 37, 62-63, 65, 69, 102, 105, 107, 114, 154, 255  
 Jalauri Pass 16, 151  
 Jālpādevī 218  
 Jamadagni 68  
 Janārdan 32  
 Janog 95, 167  
 Jāsaṭavarman 31  
 Jayakar, Mrs. P. 212, 241, 243  
 Jay Singh 28  
 Jit Singh 33  
 Jog Chand 28  
 Jogindernagar 122  
 Jvani 25

## K

- Kailāsa Pāl 27  
 Kalaśa 31  
 Kalhaṇa 20, 29, 253  
 Kālī 121-122, 234  
 Kalsi 18  
 Kalyāṇa Sen 34  
 Kanauj 20-23, 40, 59  
 Kanawar 25, 27  
 Kanet 18  
 Kangra 9, 11-12, 18-19, 21-22, 25-28, 32-34, 38, 40, 83, 99, 105-106, 108-109, 114, 116, 120, 122, 128  
 Kapāleśvara 59  
 Kapila 28

Kapilamuni 25  
 Karanchen Sen 34  
 Karjan 6-7, 65, 227, 230  
 Kārkoṭa 39-40, 71, 95-96, 99, 101, 115, 188, 205  
 Kārttikeya 185  
 Kāsapagota 18  
 Kashmir 12-13, 20, 22, 27, 29-32, 39-40, 44, 69, 71-72, 75,  
 83-87, 89-90, 92, 95-96, 99-100, 105, 107, 109-110, 113,  
 127-128, 151-152, 186-188, 205, 250, 253-254  
 Kashmir-Chamba 39-40, 72  
 Kashmiri/s 5, 44-45, 75, 80, 83-87, 90, 92, 95-97, 99-101,  
 103-106, 108-111, 114-115, 128, 152-153  
 Kāsmīra 19, 31, 40-41  
 Kasholigad 127, 141, 206, 209, 211, 232-233  
 Katrain 13, 25  
 Katroni 198-199, 233  
 Katyūri 80, 109, 128, 137, 151, 205, 221  
 Kaumārī 65, 221  
 Kauravas 17  
 Kauṭilya 17  
 Kayas 25  
 Kerala Pāl 27  
 Kha. che 83-84  
 Khadamukh 119  
 Kharoṣṭhī 18-19  
 Khekshu 127, 192, 199, 203, 213-214, 227, 239, 245  
 Khokhan 25, 28-29, 257  
 Khotan 80, 84-85, 87, 89, 104  
 Kigas 64  
 Kinnaur 14-16, 140, 146, 191  
 Kīra 22, 30  
 Kirātas 22  
 Kothī 26  
 Kot Kandi 24-25  
 Kramrisch, Stella 5, 126, 186-187, 241  
 Kṛṣṇa 60, 62-63, 151  
 Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhara 61, 95  
 Kṛṣṇa Madhava Rai 34  
 Kubera 43, 68, 138  
*Kulāntapīṭhamāhātmya* 23-24  
 Kulindas 17-18  
 Kullu 2-3, 5-7, 11-16, 18, 20, 22-23, 25-29, 32, 34-35, 37-41,  
 59-63, 65-67, 80-81, 83, 99-102, 105, 107, 113, 115, 117,  
 119, 122, 127, 134, 140, 151-155, 157-161, 164, 169,  
 171-176, 179-181, 183, 196-199, 202-203, 211, 213, 218-222,  
 224, 226-227, 229-234, 243, 246, 249-252, 257-258  
 Kullu-Sultanpur 13, 65  
 Kulūtas 13, 17, 19-21, 25, 30, 249, 252, 256  
 Kumāragupta 19  
 Kunzung-la 15  
 Kura 20  
 Kurpan 15  
 Kuru 22  
 Kuśalaparakāśa 251  
 Kuṣāṇa 18-19

**L**

Ladakh 12, 16, 26, 28, 35, 80, 84-85, 87, 89-90, 108, 151, 171  
 Lafughat 176

Lag 28  
 Lageshri 181  
 Lag Maharaja 27  
 Lag Sari 13, 27  
 Lahaul 12-13, 23, 25, 28, 32-33, 83-85, 88, 92, 96-97, 99,  
 101-105, 108, 115, 117, 151-152, 156, 181, 226, 229, 244  
 Lahaul-Spiti 11, 14, 40, 47  
 Lakhamandal 186-187  
 Lakṣaṇā (devī) 23, 29-30, 40-46, 59, 86, 93, 95-97,  
 222  
 Lakṣmī 75, 120, 160, 167, 246  
 Lakṣmī-Dāmodara 100, 114, 117  
 Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa 31, 100-101, 106-107, 109-111, 114-118,  
 123, 144, 151, 154, 160-161, 167, 175, 203, 246  
 Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple 81  
 Lakṣmīvarman 30  
 Lakuliśa 95  
 Lalitāditya Muktapīḍa 13, 22, 39-40, 71, 90, 95, 97, 99, 254  
 Lalitavarman 31  
 Larji 12, 14  
 Laukika 86, 221, 230, 232, 250, 253-254  
*līṅga* 36, 38, 70, 96-97, 124-125, 164, 237-238  
 Li-yul 104  
 Lohara 84-85, 107, 109, 113, 205  
 Lokakāla 251  
 Lokeśvara 188, 253-254  
 Los Angeles 5, 211  
 Los Angeles County Museum of Art 100-102, 208  
 Luhri 15  
 Luhriwala Nag 192

## M

Madrakāras 18  
 Magadha 17, 19  
*Mahābhāṣya* 18  
 Mahādeva 19, 25, 114, 199, 241  
 Mahādeva temple 6, 8, 188, 192  
 Mahādevī 195  
*Mahāmāyūrī* 85, 252  
 Mahātārā or Mahācīnātārā 122  
 Mahendrapāla 22  
 Maheśvara 151, 157, 174, 183  
 Mahipāla 22-23  
 Mahiṣa 139, 158, 165, 167  
 Mahiṣamardinī, Mahiṣasuramardinī 29, 37, 47, 62, 69, 73-75,  
 101, 106-107, 128, 140  
 Mahiṣāsura 129, 158  
 Mahun 19  
 Mahun Nag 234  
 Maitreya 193  
 Majhima 18  
 Makarsa 13, 27  
 Malana 13, 25  
 Malayaketu 17  
 Malet, P. 149-150, 157, 165, 173  
 Manali 3, 5, 7, 12, 15, 25, 29, 37, 65, 119, 127, 226, 249, 255  
 Mandi 20, 25, 27-28, 30, 32-36, 249-250, 259  
 Mangalaur 34  
 Mahaleshvar 224



Manikarn 13, 24-25, 28, 119, 155, 174, 219  
 Maṇimaheśa 23, 45-46, 121-122  
 Mañjuśrī 87, 90, 235  
 Mansar 188  
 Man Singh 25, 28, 230, 257  
 Manu 68  
 Māra 103  
*Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 18  
 Markulā (devī) 30, 40, 47, 88, 96-97, 103, 107-108, 115, 117, 187  
 Martand 68  
 Maru 29-30, 40, 94  
 Masāṇa Devatā 234  
 Masrur 21, 40, 59  
 Mathura 62-63, 69, 185-186  
*Matsya Purāṇa* 17  
 Maukhari 13, 59, 95  
 Maukharis 20-21  
 Maurya 17-18, 20  
 Mehla 11, 32, 115-118, 180, 256  
 Meruvarman 23, 26, 29-30, 42, 44-46, 90, 93-97, 99, 249  
 Mihirakula 20  
 Mihiralakṣmī 59-60  
 Mihireśvara 59  
 Miog, Jan 130-134, 156-161, 166, 169-170, 172-176, 215, 237, 246  
 Mitra, D. 68  
*Mohras* 2, 5-6, 8-9, 24-25, 28, 126-127, 140, 142, 148, 163, 167-169, 171, 185-186, 192, 198-199, 201-222, 224, 226-227, 229-241, 243, 245, 249-250, 254, 257  
 Moṣūṇa (Mūṣūṇa) 29, 31, 42, 44  
 Moṣūṇavarman 29-30  
*Mudrārākṣasa* 17, 19  
 Mūlakadeva 18  
 Murti 69  
 Mūṣūṇavarman 46

## N

Nāga 181  
 Nāgabhata 22  
 Nāgapāla 31  
 Nāgarī 221, 249-250  
 Naggar 24-25, 37, 65, 154, 171, 226-227  
 Nāmasaṅgiti 103  
 Namgya 145  
 Nan Chao 206  
 Nanda 17  
 Nandi 23, 29-30, 42, 44-45, 75, 86, 93, 95, 97, 122, 139  
 Nandivikramāditya 254  
 Nārada Pāl 26-27  
 Narasimha 31, 86, 93, 96-97, 119, 174, 232, 243  
 Nārāyaṇa 25, 198  
 Narendra Pāl 27  
 Narkanda 14, 16  
 National Museum 188  
 Navasurendrādityanandi 252, 254  
 Nayanādevī (Nennadevi) 26, 31, 125-126  
 Neoli 199

Neven, A. 75, 101, 143  
 Ngari Khorsum 84, 182  
*Nilamatapurāṇa* 71  
 Nirmand (Nirmaṇḍa) 4, 6, 15-16, 20, 23, 25, 30, 40-41, 59-65, 69, 74-75, 80, 95, 106, 108-109, 113, 123-124, 127-129, 133-134, 137-138, 140, 142-144, 147-148, 150-152, 156, 164-165, 175, 180, 183, 186, 196, 219, 222, 225, 249-251  
 Nirath 64, 80, 99-100, 127, 137, 138, 140, 146-148, 150-151, 159, 219  
 Nirrti Pāl 26  
 Nishu (fair) 183  
 Nogli 15  
 Norton Simon Foundation 88, 103, 122  
 Nurpur 32

## O

Ohri, V. C. 5-6

## P

Pabar 15  
 Padmasambhava 33  
 Pal, Dr. P. 5, 24, 32, 71, 86, 100-102, 104, 187-188, 192, 208, 252-253  
 Pandoh 12  
 Pandrethan 41, 44-45, 68, 95  
 Pangī 31  
 Pangī Range 11-12  
 Pangna 30  
 Pāṇini 17-18, 20  
 Parāśara 35, 68  
 Parāśara temple 202  
 Parashar 34-35, 203-204, 210, 212  
 Paraśurāma 59, 250  
 Paraśurāma temple 60, 63, 124, 127-128, 133-134, 138, 144, 147-148, 156, 165, 175, 196  
 Parṇaśabarī 140  
 Parol 25, 27  
 Paruṣṇī 11  
 Parvataka 17  
 Pārvatī 13-14, 25, 27, 106, 238  
 Patan 236, 242  
 Patañjali 18  
 Patlikuhl 65  
 Paṭola 84-86, 103, 252-254  
 Payar 44  
 Philadelphia Museum 187-188  
 Phiyang 108  
 Phiyang Sgom pa 108  
 Phojal 13  
 Phojal Nala 13, 25, 27  
 Piandjikent 87, 89  
 Pir Panjal Range 11-12, 83  
 Prabhākaravardhana 20-21  
 Pradyumma 116  
 Prahlāda 158  
*Prajñāpāramitā* 86  
 Prasiddha Pāl 25

Pratap Singh Varman 32  
 Pratihāra 13, 21-22, 38-39, 64, 80, 89, 105, 108-110, 113-115,  
 124, 128, 137, 151, 192, 205, 221-222  
 Pritam Singh 25  
 Prithvi Singh 24, 32, 117, 256  
 Pulchan 13  
 Punjab 3, 80, 106, 109, 113, 128, 186  
 Purāṇas 17-19  
 Puṣpabhūti 20-21

## R

Radha-Krishna 116-117  
 Rahla 12, 26, 154  
 Rājasekhara 22-23  
 Rajasthan 115, 185, 227  
*Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 20, 31, 253  
 Rajjilabala 20  
 Rajput/s 115, 207, 219, 226-227  
 Raj Singh 33  
 Rājyaśrī 21  
 Rājyavardhana 21  
 Rāma 28, 145  
 Rāmacandra 155, 174, 219, 227  
 Ramāpati 24  
 Rampur-Bushahr 15-16, 127, 140, 144-145  
 Raṇa Pāl 31  
 Ranjit Dev 33  
 Ranjit Singh 28, 33-35  
 Rarang 145  
 Rāṣṭrakūṭa 22  
*ratha* 5-7, 81, 122, 154, 180-183, 193, 195-199, 202-203, 210,  
 219-220, 227, 229, 231, 233-234, 245  
 Rati 116  
 Ravi 4, 8, 11-12, 17, 19, 26, 28-29, 31-32, 42, 151  
 Raviṣeṇa 20, 25, 59  
 Ray, H. C. 31  
 Rewalsar 33  
*Rgveda* 11  
 Roerich, N. 171  
 Rohtang 16, 25-26, 32, 151  
 Rohru 15  
 Rudradāsa 19  
 Rudra Pāl 25  
 Rupī 25, 27

## S

Sahadeva 18  
 Sāhilavarman 29-31, 106, 123-124, 126, 252  
 Sahni, D. R. 64  
 Saho 11  
 Sahu Sen 34  
 Saicho 12  
 Sainj 13-14, 25  
 Sainsar 27  
 Sainsbury, Robert & Lisa 168  
 Śaiva 60-61, 70, 73, 103, 182, 193, 227  
 Sajla 2, 27, 229  
 Śaka 18-19, 255

Sakor 34  
 Śakti 30, 96, 140  
 Śaktidevī 23, 29, 42, 44, 46-47, 70-71, 73, 86-87, 93, 95, 97,  
 111, 222, 224  
 Śaktidevī temple 11, 40, 44-46, 70-73, 75, 185, 236  
 Śaktism 168  
 Śākyamuni 86, 88, 103, 250, 252  
 Sal 11  
 Sālavahana 31  
 Sālipurī 20  
 Śalri 20, 249  
 Śālva 18  
 Śamīdevī Trailokadevī 253  
 Samudragupta 18-19, 59  
 Samudrasena 20, 23, 25, 30, 59-60, 62, 251  
 Sandhyādevī 24, 27  
 Sañjaysena 20, 25, 59  
 Śaṅkarasena 86  
 Sansār Chand 28, 33-35  
 Sansāra Pāl 25  
 Santoṣa Pāl 26  
 Saptarṣi 27, 250-251, 253  
 Śāradā 24, 222, 249, 251-252, 254  
 Sarahan 15-16, 127, 140, 180, 191  
 Saraj 14, 25, 27-28  
 Sarasvatī 111  
 Sarsai 115, 161, 171, 175, 246  
 Śarva (Śarvavarman) 20-21, 59-60  
 Sarvari 13, 25, 27  
 Śāstra Samvat 20, 31, 249-250, 257  
 Śatadru 21  
 Saumatikas 30  
 Schroeder, Ulrich von 84, 86-87, 99, 101, 187  
 Scythian 84  
 Scytho-Turkish 86  
 Sena 34, 139  
 Śeṣanāga 196-197  
 Śeṣaśāyin 154  
 Shamsheer Sen 34  
 Sham Singh 33  
 Sher Singh 36  
 Shipke 145  
 Shuttleworth, H. L. 250  
 Sialkot 106  
 Siddha Gaṇeśa 34  
 Siddhapa 250-251  
 Siddha Pāl 24, 27, 226-227, 229, 255  
 Siddha Sen 34  
 Sikander Pal 26  
 Silk Road 85, 87, 169  
 Simla 3, 14-15, 18, 64, 151, 163, 179-180, 218, 249  
 Simla Museum 141, 210, 238-239, 244  
 Sindhu 19, 21  
 Sirmaur 15  
 Sissu 12  
 Siul 11  
 Śiva 6, 24, 36, 75, 92, 96-97, 104, 106, 114, 117-118, 140-142,  
 198-199, 201, 203, 222, 226-227, 238, 241, 254  
 Śiva Dakṣeśvara 59  
 Śiva Mahadeva 181

Śiva Tripurāntaka 59  
 Śivarātri 8, 10, 180, 182, 197, 202, 210, 233-234  
 Skanda 167  
 Skandagupta 19-20  
 Skardu 84, 87  
 Sogdians 87, 104  
 Solang Nala 13  
 Somavarman 30-31, 252  
 Sotheby's 236  
 Sou-lin-t'o-i-tche 86  
 Spink & Son 216  
 Spiti 13-14, 23-24, 28, 84-85, 87, 103, 145  
 Sridatteśvara Pāl 26, 30  
 Śrīkaṇṭha 22  
 Srinagar 83-85  
 Srinagar Museum 100, 115  
 Śrī Navasurendrādityanandi 85  
 Sri Singh 33  
 Strong Ide btzan 33  
 Sthāṇvīśvara 20-21, 30  
 Sugatidarśana Lokeśvara 86, 188, 254  
 Suhīdevī 31  
 Sujunīdevī 4-5, 80, 106, 123-124, 126, 180, 249-251  
 Suket 13, 26-28, 33-35  
 Sultanpur 24-25  
 Sundernagar 34  
 Suraj Mal 32  
 Suraj Sen 34  
 Surendrāditya 85  
 Surendravikramāditya Nanda 85, 253  
 Surma Sen 34  
 Sutej 4, 6-8, 11, 14-15, 17-20, 25, 27-28, 80, 99-100, 105,  
 108-109, 127-128, 133-134, 137, 140-145, 147-151, 156,  
 158-159, 163-165, 167, 170, 179-181, 187-189, 192-193,  
 195-199, 201, 203, 205-206, 209-217, 221-225, 227, 232-234,  
 236-237, 244  
 Swali, H. K. 167  
 Swamikannu Pillai, L. D. 251  
 Swat 79, 84-87, 104, 187  
 Syal 24  
 Śyāmā Kālī 34  
 Śyam Sen 24, 34

## T

Tabo 103  
 Tākri 24, 28, 182, 221-222, 245, 249-250, 252, 254, 259  
 Takṣaśilā (Taxila) 19  
 Tandi 11-12, 26  
 Tārā 70-72, 236, 242  
 Tarna Hill 34  
 Tedhi (or Tej) Singh 25, 28-29, 232, 257  
 Teel 198  
 Tegh Chand 28  
 Teja Pāl 26  
 Tej Singh 25, 28, 257  
 Thanesar 20, 22  
 Tibet (Tibetan/s) 3, 14, 16, 21, 26-27, 33, 38, 80, 83-85, 87,  
 104, 111, 137-138, 145, 151, 205-206  
 Tikri 191, 196, 202, 212, 227

Tirthan 13-14  
 Todar Mal 32  
 Tons 18  
 Toramāna 20  
 Trigarta 30  
 Trigartas 17  
 Triloknātha 181, 226  
 Tripurasundarī 234  
 Tripurasundarī temple 154  
 Trivikrama Sena 26  
 Tundah 11  
 Turfan 85, 89  
 Turkestan 87  
 Turki 84  
 Turkish 84-85, 89, 103-104  
 Turki Shahi 84-85, 105, 186, 205  
 Turuška 84

## U

Ucita Pāl 26  
 Udaipur (Udaypur) 12, 33, 40, 47, 88, 96-97, 103, 108, 115,  
 117  
 Uday Singh 32-33  
 Udayavarman 31  
 Udhran Pāl 24, 27  
 Ugar Singh 33  
 Uhl 14, 28  
 Umā-Maheśvara 9, 73, 75, 104, 106-107, 141-142, 157  
 Umā 75, 140, 142, 181  
 Umed Singh 33  
 University of East Anglia 168  
 Utpala 72, 85, 87, 101, 187  
 Uttar Pradesh 15, 80, 90, 107-109, 117, 127-128, 130-132,  
 137-139, 151, 161, 186-188, 204

## V

Vaidyanātha 38  
 Vaikuṇṭha(nātha) 90, 100-101, 114-116, 236  
 Vairocana 86-87  
 Vaiṣṇava 100-101, 140, 151, 167, 182, 227  
 Vajrādityanandi 85  
 Vajrapāṇi 87  
 Vajrasattva 88  
 Vajreśvarī 115  
 Vākpati 22  
 Vallāpura 30-31  
 Vāmana Purāṇa 18  
 Varman 42, 249  
 Varuṇasena 20, 25, 59  
 Vasudeva 90, 100-101, 105  
 Vatsarāja 22  
 Vaṭuka Bhairava 122  
 Vāyu Purāṇa 17-18  
 Veṇugopāla 116-117, 150, 172  
 Verinag 100, 115  
 Vibhaya Pāl 25-26  
 Vidagdhavarman 31  
 Vijayamitra 19, 249

Vikramādityanandi 86  
 Vikrama Sena 26  
 Vipāśā 12  
 Virabhadra 65, 223, 254  
 Virasaha 223, 254  
 Vira Sena 26, 34  
 Virayaśas 19, 249  
 Viśākhadatta 17  
 Viṣṇu 2, 27, 38-39, 41-42, 64, 67, 75, 90, 99, 101, 111, 120,  
 124, 128, 130-132, 139-140, 151-154, 158, 160, 163,  
 167-169, 212, 226-227, 229, 237, 240-241, 246, 255  
 Viṣṇu Caturānana 43, 47  
 Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī 74  
 Viṣṇu Śeṣaśāyin 122  
*Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* 71  
 Viśuddha Pāl 25  
 Viśvāmitra 19  
 Viśveśvara 22, 37, 39  
 Viśveśvara temple 64, 69, 155  
 Vogel, J. Ph. 29, 250-252, 254

## W

Waziri Lag Maharaja 25  
 Waziri Lag Sari 25  
 Williams, J. (Mrs.) 65, 69

## Y

Yamunā 15-16, 18, 21, 38, 42, 115  
 Yarkand 16, 80, 84-85, 151  
 Yarkand-Ladakh 33  
 Yaśovarman 22, 40  
 Yaudheyas 18  
 Yavana 21  
 Yogeśvara 121-122  
 Yoginisthan 65  
 Yudhiṣṭhira 17  
 Yugākara 31  
 Yugākaravarman 30-31  
 Yugandharas 18

## Z

Zalim Sen 35  
 Zanskar 12, 85, 87

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

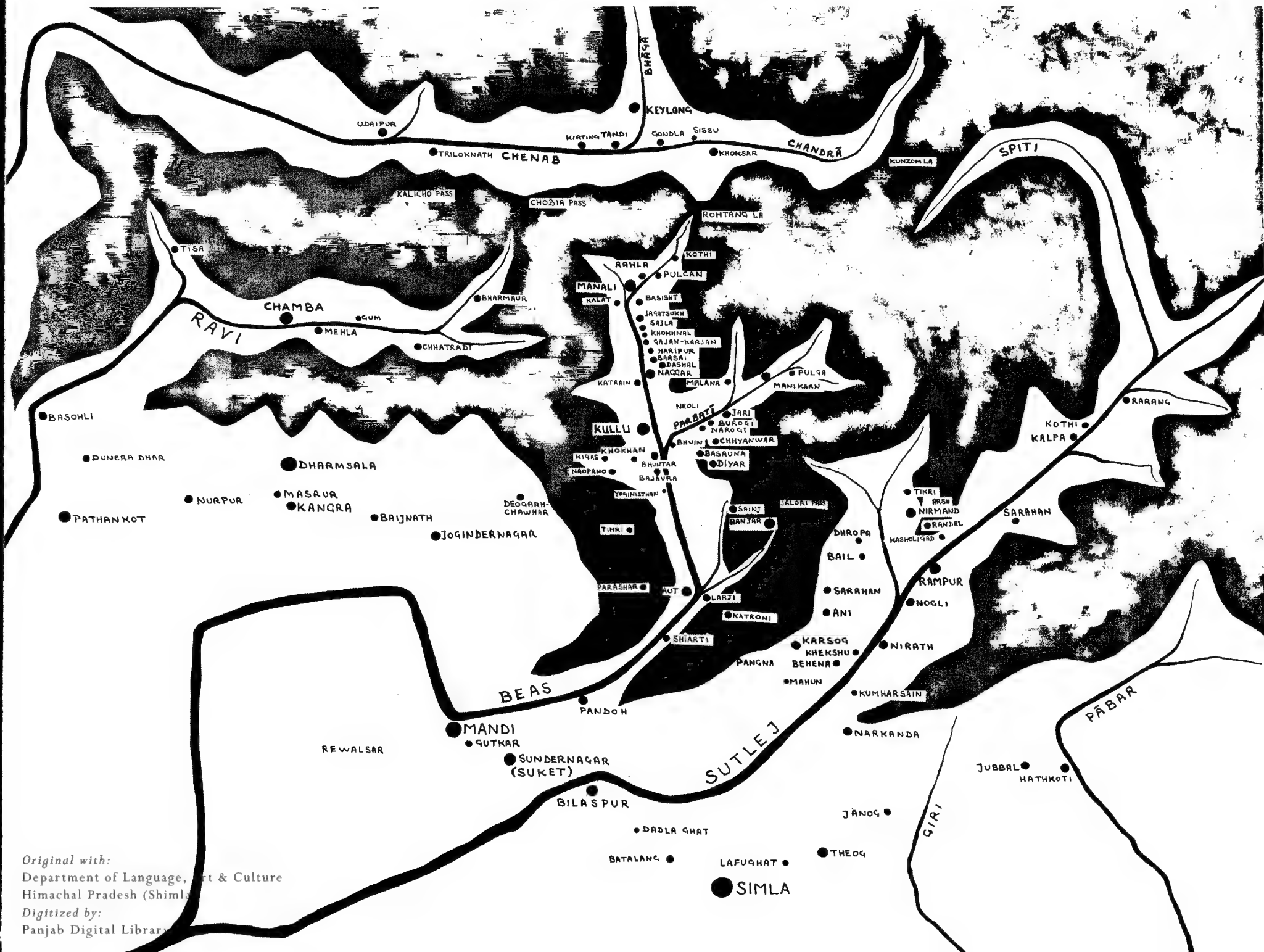
Several individuals have been associated with the production of this book. We cannot name all of them individually, but hope that they will accept our sincere thanks. However, we must mention in particular Mrs. G. J. Darbari and Miss A. Dante of Franco-Indian Pharmaceuticals Pvt. Ltd., who executed the manuscript of this book with great care. We also extend our thanks to Mr. G. U. Mehta and Mr. Arun K. Mehta of Vakil & Sons and their colleagues, especially Mr. Suresh Pradhan, Mr. B. L. Hardikar and Mr. S. T. Kolte. Without the fullest co-operation of all these ladies and gentlemen, this work could not have been published in such a short time.



*Devatās of Karjan village being put to sleep at the conclusion of a fair.*















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